

An Enigmatic Literature

Interpreting an Unedited Collection of Byzantine Riddles in a Manuscript of Cardinal Bessarion (Marcianus Graecus 512)

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Among the many treasures of the *Palatine Anthology*, the most peculiar gems are doubtless the epigrams of the fourteenth book, a curious collection of riddles, oracles, and mathematical problems. But while the Delphic oracles are already quoted by many classical authors (Herodotus *in primis*) and while some of the riddles have a long tradition (such as the αἰνίγμα of the Sphinx or the γρίφοι mentioned by Athenaeus in the tenth book of his *Deipnosophists*), the conundrums that defy the reader by playing on the letters of words are the first examples of a kind of erudite amusement that seems to become more and more popular in the Byzantine era. Epigram 105, with its solutions that go from the first (πούς) to the last (ς) through a series of progressive eliminations of the initial letter of each resultant word (οὐς and ὕς), is presumably the model for many other similar verbal jokes that can be read in a few medieval manuscripts with the most implausible attributions.¹

This kind of riddle may be found in abundance in other, more recent, Byzantine poems, presumably

composed since the second half of the tenth century. These poetic αἰνίγματα form a corpus of riddles that has been published either separately (the so-called “collections” of Michael Psellos, Basil Megalomytes, and Aulikalamos, as edited by Boissonade, and that of Eustathios Makrembolites, as edited by Treu) or together (the comprehensive edition by Čelica Milovanović).² The word “collection” is not, however, wholly appropriate for these ancient compilations, because they are not fixed collections written by a single Greek poet, but a quite heterogeneous group of riddles scattered in several fairly recent manuscripts and ascribed sometimes to one author, sometimes to another.³ Moreover, neither the scant number of pages

2 For Michael Psellos, Basil Megalomytes, and Aulikalamos, see J.-F. Boissonade, *Anecdota Graeca e codicibus regiis* (Paris, 1831), 3:429–55; for Eustathios Makrembolites, see M. Treu, *Eustathii Macrembolitae quae feruntur aenigmata* (Breslau, 1893); for the Byzantine riddles, see Č. Milovanović, *Βυζαντινὰ αἰνίγματα: Византијске заговетке* (Belgrade, 1986). On the peculiarity of Treu’s excellent edition, see n. 26 below.

3 In contrast, the Latin riddle collections are very consistent: the more than thirty manuscripts of Symphosius all contain (with not very significant differences between the two main families) the one hundred riddles written by this mysterious author; Aldhelm of Malmesbury, the author of another collection of one hundred riddles (a number clearly inspired by Symphosius’s work), is well known; the collections of Tatwine (archbishop of Canterbury between 731 and 734) and Eusebius (a pen-name of another clergyman, whose real name was Hwaetberht, abbot of the Jarrow priory in the second half of the eighth century) are clearly connected,

1 N. Hopkinson chooses Epigram 105 as an exemplar of the enigmatic epigrams of late antiquity: *Greek Poetry of the Imperial Period: An Anthology* (Cambridge and New York, 1994), 28 and 105. On this epigram, see also S. Beta, “Poesia enigmistica della Decadenza,” in *La decadenza: Un seminario*, ed. S. Ronchey (Palermo, 2002), 120; and C. Luz, “Who Has It Got in Its Pockets? Or, What Makes a Riddle a Riddle?” in *The Muses at Play: Riddles and Wordplay in Greek and Latin Poetry*, ed. J. Kwapisz, D. Petrain, and M. Szymański (Berlin and New York, 2013), 95.

that literary historians have dedicated to this kind of poetry, nor the concise notes of the paleographers who have unearthed these riddles from a few hidden manuscripts (the articles, for instance, published by the Greek scholar Spyridon Lambros in his review *Neos Ellenomnemon*), nor the short introduction to Milovanović's edition provide detailed answers to some of the questions provoked by the peculiar features of these strange literary (or subliterate) productions: Who were their real authors? Why were they attributed to famous authors? For what reasons were they written? What kind of circulation did these poems have?⁴

In this essay I shall try to answer some of these questions through my own edition, translation, and commentary of a "collection" (a word I use advisedly) of some riddles concealed in the pages of one of the 746 manuscripts presented by Cardinal Bessarion to the Republic of Venice in 1468—the first nucleus of the Bibliotheca Marciana. I hope that the analysis of these hitherto unedited texts will shed new light upon a minor, secular genre that was very popular among Byzantine intellectuals and can still be appreciated in our times as well.⁵

The Marcianus Graecus 512 is a small manuscript of 269 pages written at the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century.⁶ The entire codex appears to have been written by

because, to the forty riddles composed by Tatwine, Eusebius added his own sixty, in order to bring the total up to one hundred (by now a traditional number).

4 H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (Munich, 1978), 2:119, dedicates only eight lines to this subject; Lambros's articles are cited below (nn. 46, 63, 78); in the introduction to her collection of riddles, Milovanović (7–14) deals briefly with some of these issues before explaining the principles that guided her in the preparation of her edition.

5 I shall make more thorough remarks on this curious subject in the introduction to a future edition of all the Byzantine riddles from the *Palatine Anthology* to the fall of Constantinople.

6 A full description of the MS is in E. Mioni, *Bibliothecae Divi Marci Venetiarum Codices Graeci Manuscripti*, vol. 2, *Thesaurus antiquus: codices 300–625* (Rome, 1985), 369 ("Chart., saec. XIII ex., mm. 210 x 140, ff. II.269, lineis plenius 22–29 [ff. 256v–264 binis columnis], scripturae spatium mm. 160/170 x 100/110. Chartae orientales mediocris notae madore usque tactae, ubique tamen sine scriptiois detrimento"). L. Sternbach, "Spicilegium Prodrômeum," *Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności. Wydział filologiczny* 24 (1904): 337, dated the manuscript to the fourteenth century. On the similarity between the handwriting of Marc. Gr. 512 and that of the copyist

a single copyist in a minuscule handwriting quite close to the script style known as *Fettaugen-Mode*;⁷ there are also many marginal annotations written by various hands.⁸ It contains a wide selection of works chosen with a clear common denominator, at least at the beginning. The first fifteen items (out of thirty-five) deal with linguistic topics, starting with the *De obiectionibus insolubilibus* of Maximus of Ephesus and ending with a compendium of Herennius Philo's *De propria dictione*; among the other grammatical works, worthy of mention are Alexander Numenius's *De figuris rhetoricis* and pseudo-Aelius Herodianus's *De figuris*.⁹ The subjects of the other writings are multifarious (philosophy, medicine, music, mathematics, astronomy, theology, and literature);¹⁰

who wrote the riddles of Pal. Gr. 356 (dated by Stevenson to the fourteenth century), see below, 233.

7 See Mioni, *Codices*, 369: "Scriptura minuscula recentior, quae satis accedit ad illam rationem scribendi quae 'Fettaugenstil' appellata est"; "Librarius unus nigro vel subnigro atramento satis diligenter volumen totum et (f. 1) indicem usque ad f. 104 summam in scripsit." For the Fettaugen-Mode, see H. Hunger, "Die sogenannte Fettaugen-Mode in griechischen Handschriften des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts," *ByzF* 4 (1972): 105–13. According to J. Ahn, "Alexandri de figuris sententiarum et verborum: Sinnfiguren und Wortfiguren von Alexander Numeniu," *Inauguraldissertation zur Erlangung des Grades eines Doktors der Philosophie der Georg-August-Universität (Göttingen, 2004)*, xvii, "der Schreiber des Marc. 512 war offenbar ein Mann mit scharfen Auge und philologischer Bildung."

8 See Mioni, *Codices*, 369: "Inscriptiones, litterae initiales aliaque notabilia, paupere tamen cultu, rubro colore delineata sunt"; "Manus aliae . . . paginas vel spatia vacua expleverunt." Both Bessarion's ex libris are present in the book: the Latin (*Liber b[essarionis] car. Tusculani*) and the Greek one (*κτῆμα Βησσαρίωνος καρδηνάλεως τοῦ τῶν Τούσκλων*).

9 The other grammatical and rhetorical works are the following: Gregorius Corinthius, *De dialectis* (excerpts) and *De figuris poeticis*; some short sections of Phrynichus's works; a summary of Hermogenes' *De ideis*; a metrical chapter of Dionysius of Halicarnassus's *De compositione verborum*; George Choïroboskos, *De figuris poeticis* and some excerpts from his commentaries on the canons of Theodosius; pseudo-Tryphon, *De passionibus dictionum*; Aelius Herodianus, *De barbarismo et soloecismo*; Zenobius grammaticus, *De coniugatione verborum*; Romanus magister Philoponi, *De verborum in -μι coniugatione*.

10 Philosophy: Michael Psellos, *De animae generatione apud Platonem* and *De omnifaria doctrina*; some mottoes taken from the life of Diogenes the Cynic written by Diogenes Laërtius. Music: Theon of Smyrna, *De musica*. Mathematics: Theon of Smyrna, an excerpt from the *Expositio rerum mathematicarum*. Astronomy: Proclus, *Hypotyposis astronomicarum positionum*; Cleomedes, *De*

eventually, near the end of the manuscript, we find our section of riddles.¹¹

The presence of riddles in a codex devoted mainly to rhetorical works is not unusual: a good example is Vat. Gr. 889, a manuscript copied in the second half of the fifteenth century by Francesco Maturanzio, in which twenty-four Byzantine riddles (mostly present in Michael Psellos's and Basil Megalomytes' "collections") are placed alongside the *Erotemata* of Manuel Moschopoulos and the *De figuribus poeticis* of George Choïroboskos. Such a coupling is neither a surprise nor a simple coincidence; in much ancient rhetorical discussion, the riddle was considered a significant part of rhetoric, as in the same *De figuribus poeticis*, where αἰνίγμα is one of the twenty-seven poetic tropes discussed by the Byzantine scholar.¹²

But riddles owe their presence in medieval manuscripts to other reasons as well. The most common is also the silliest; because they were usually very short in length, they could be easily inserted wherever there was a blank space.¹³ For instance, in the second half of f. 227v, after the end of the second book of Cleomedes' *On the Circular Motions of the Celestial Bodies* (a treatise very important for us because it is the original

source for the well-known story of how Eratosthenes was able to measure the Earth's circumference), a more recent hand has added, in order to fill the empty space, two other works: the *Signa et nomina zodiaci* and an anonymous riddle. Since it is a quite famous one (and the author has even written its title: αἰνίγμα εἰς τένταν), Mioni did not have trouble in identifying it; he writes it is Michael Psellos, *aenigma εἰς τένταν*.¹⁴

Other similar instances are so numerous as to render quotation unnecessary. Let me just mention one interesting example, because it concerns a famous manuscript. The last page (f. 141r) of Pal. Gr. 116, a fourteenth-century codex bought in Constantinople in 1406 by Guarino da Verona (who marked his lucky acquisition with a note at the end of the manuscript) and containing Manuel Chrysoloras's *Erotemata* and the Byzantine triad of Aristophanes, displays, according to Stevenson, "aenigmata III, iambico metro," written by a different hand; this addition proves that riddles were considered a useful (and amusing) way to avoid wasting space.¹⁵

But let us return to the other riddles of Marc. Gr. 512. The collection begins after the poems of Theodore Prodromos—to be more precise, at f. 263r, after the end of the long *carmen in Manuelem Anemam*.¹⁶ Here,

motu corporum caelestium; the *Methodus sortis inveniendae secundum Ptolemaeum*. Theology: Proclus, *Elements of Theology*; Cyril of Alexandria, a short fragment from a homily on Palm Sunday. Literature: some epistles of Alciphron, Synesius, and Plato; a few poems of Theodore Prodromos. The section on medicine consists of some medical prescriptions and some excerpts from the second, third, and fourth books of the *Cyranides*. These texts have been partially published by E. Gherro, "L'aquila nella farmacopea medioevale e bizantina: Con testi inediti dal Marc. Gr. 512," *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia Patavina di Scienze, Lettere e Arti* 88 (1975–76): 3:125–35, and, in a more complete form, by Anna Meschini (Pontani), "Le Ciranidi nel Marc. Gr. 512," *Atti Pont* 31 (1983): 145–77. Meschini's edition has been discussed twice by D. Bain, "Marcianus Graecus 512 (678) and the Text of the Cyranides: Some Preliminary Observations," *RFIC* 12 (1993): 427–39, and "Some Unpublished Cyranidean Material in Marc. Gr. 512 (678): Three Addenda to Meschini," *ZPapEpig* 104 (1994): 36–42.

11 The last items of the codex are an astrological treatise falsely ascribed to Pythagoras (*De formis et significationibus duodecim signorum Zodiaci*) and a *laudatio metrica* of St. Panteleemon composed by John Geometres.

12 George Choïroboskos, *De figuribus poeticis* 20 (3:253.8–31 Spengel): αἰνίγμα ἐστὶ λόγος σκοτεινὸν καὶ κεκαλυμμένον ἔχων ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸ νοούμενον etc.

13 Therefore Hunger, *Literatur*, 2:119, calls them *Lückenbüßer* ("fill-ins").

14 On this riddle (no. 11 Boissonade, no. 38 Cougny, no. 80 Milovanović, no. 45 Westerink) see below, 214–15. Mioni follows Boissonade in ascribing the riddles to Michael Psellos, but its author is Christopher Mitylenaios (see below, 216). The meter of this and of all the riddles of our MS is the Byzantine dodecasyllable; not all the poems are metrically correct; there are a few cases of hiatus and some unprosodic lines.

15 H. Stevenson, *Codices Manuscripti Palatini Graeci Bibliothecae Vaticanae* (Vatican City, 1885), 55; on the MS, see also J. W. White, "The Manuscripts of Aristophanes," *CPh* 1 (1906): 17; C. N. Eberline, *Studies in the Manuscript Tradition of the Ranae of Aristophanes* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1980), 38, 80–84, 91, and 147. On the riddles of the MS (which are four, and not three as stated by Stevenson), see S. Beta, "'You Possess Me, You Bring Me with You, I Am a Part of You': A New Byzantine Riddle in the Pal. Gr. 116," *BZ* 107 (2014): 37–50.

16 Cf. W. Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos: Historische Gedichte* (Vienna, 1974), 450–55. Among the manuscripts that preserve a group of poems of Prodromos, Par. Gr. 854 (a MS written in the second half of the thirteenth century) presents at ff. 225–32 a collection that is very similar to the one we see in Marc. Gr. 512; since Sternbach, "Spicilegium Prodromeum," 337, 339 n. 3, 340 nn. 4 and 5, some scholars (such as Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos*, 155; A. Acconcia Longo, *Il calendario giambico in monastici di Teodoro Prodromo* [Rome, 1983], 76; G. De Gregorio, "Teodoro Prodromo e la spada di Alessio Contostefano," *Nέα Πώμη* 7 [2010]: 195 n. 5 and

after the sixth line of the first column and two horizontal strokes, we read twenty-two riddles, a section that ends after the last line of the first column of f. 264r.¹⁷

According to Mioni, the first four riddles come from Basil Megalomytes' "collection," the fifth comes from Psellos's "collection," and the remaining seventeen are just simple *aenigmata*, without any indication of authorship. For these attributions, Mioni relied on the appendix printed by Cougny almost a century before his own catalogue—a publication whose only merit was joining the riddles edited by Boissonade to those pulled out of Athenaeus's *Deipnosophists*.¹⁸ But, as I stated at the beginning of this article, the consistency of these "collections" is quite unstable: while the items of the *Sammlung* that the manuscripts attribute to Michael Psellos are often the same, those belonging to the "collection" of Basil Megalomytes are much more interchangeable; the numeration we find in Boissonade's edition is simply the result of the fusion of the two "collections" ascribed to Basil Megalomytes, which the French scholar found in the couple of manuscripts he used for his *Anecdota Graeca*.¹⁹

205 n. 21) think that the poems of Prodrōmos present in Marc. Gr. 512 (fols. 256–63) are a direct copy of Par. Gr. 854. On the curious fact that in both manuscripts the Prodrōmea are followed by the same riddle, see below, 218.

17 The second column of f. 264r discusses how the hours of the day can be measured according to the shadow of the human body (a shortened version of the text is published in I. Heeg, *Catalogus codicum astrologorum graecorum*, vol. 5 [Brussels, 1910], 76–78).

18 The first enigmatic item (no. XXX of Mioni's description) is "<Basilus Megalomytes>, Aenigmata (f. 263). Secundum recensio-nem quae ed. Cougny (in *Epigrammatum... Appendix*, 573... 576) sunt nn. 54, 69, 67, 68. Succedit (f. 263) aenigma <Michaelis Pselli> n. 38, vv. 1, 4, 5 (ibid., 570–571)." In his appendix to the *Palatine Anthology*, E. Cougny published seventy-six enigmatic epigrams not included in Kephala's collection (*Epigrammatum Anthologia Palatina cum Planudeis et Appendice nova epigrammatum veterum ex libris et marmoribus ductorum*, vol. 3 [Paris, 1890], chap. 7). On the flaws of this edition, see S. Zanandrea, "Enigmistica bizantina: considerazioni preliminari," *MiscMarc* 2–4 (1987–1989): 141–57 (in part. 143). When Mioni published his catalogue, the collection of Milovanović had not been edited yet. In Cougny's *Appendix*, the four riddles have the following numbers: 54, 69, 67, 68. The second enigmatic item (no. XXXI of Mioni's description) is "Aenigmata 17." For each of these riddles, Mioni provides incipits, number of lines, and solutions; while the solutions written in the MS are between parentheses, those divined by Mioni himself are between square brackets.

19 On the two families of manuscripts that preserve the eighteen *aenigmata* ascribed to Psellos (but that were not all composed by him, see below, 233), see L. G. Westerink's Teubner edition (*Michael*

In fact, the first five riddles of the aenigmatic section of Marc. Gr. 512 are all present in the "collection" of Basil Megalomytes edited by Boissonade: numbers 11 (solution: *καρίς*, shrimp), 34 (*ρίς*, nose), 30 (*ἄρτος*, bread), 31 (*σῦς*, pig), and 7 (*τέντα*, tent).²⁰ Why did Mioni write that the fifth riddle was to be attributed to Psellos?²¹ Because it belongs to Psellos's "collection" too—in fact, it is a riddle we have already mentioned, the *ainigma* εἰς τένταν.²² But, even though both riddles (Psellos's and Megalomytes') share the same solution, their texts are very different.

The text of the riddle in the manuscripts that have handed down to us Psellos's "collection" of riddles reads as follows:

Psellus: Poemata [Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1992]); on the title of the "collection," see below, 236–37. The manuscripts used by Boissonade for the edition of what he (quite arbitrarily) called *Αἰνίγματα συντεθέντα παρὰ Βασιλείου τοῦ Μεγαλομίτου* (forty-three riddles) are the Parisini Regii 968 (fifteenth century, fols. 207–10) and 1630 (fourteenth century, fols. 137–39): the first one contains thirty-three riddles (1–2, 5–6, 8–16, 18, 20–21, 23–27, 29–32, 35–36, 38–43); the second one thirty-seven (1–31, 33–38).

20 The order of the riddles is neither the one we find in the two MSS used by Boissonade nor that attested in some of the other MSS that preserve a conspicuous part of the "collection" of Basil Megalomytes (with the sole exception of the pair 30–31). These MSS are Vat. Barb. Gr. 41 and Marc. Gr. II 93. The first one (a MS copied by Leone Allacci *editionis causa*, according to Westerink), after the section *Riddles of the Most Sapient Psellos* (only seventeen items, because no. 49 Westerink is missing—a peculiarity of the MSS belonging to this family), shows at fols. 104r–105v eighteen riddles present in the "collection" of Megalomytes (nos. 2, 5–6, 11–16, 18, 20, 24, 27, 30–31, 35–36 Boissonade); on the MS, see V. Capocci, *Codices Barberiniani Graeci*, vol. 1: *Codices 1–163* (Rome, 1958), 42 ff.; another Allatian MS that contains a similar "collection" is Vallicell. Allat. 63 (fols. 233–38). In the second one (a MS of the sixteenth century), Psellos's seventeen riddles are followed at fols. 129–33 by twenty-one Megalomytes riddles (nos. 2, 5–6, 11–17, 20–21, 23–24, 27, 30–31, 35–36, 38, 41 Boissonade); on this MS, see E. Mioni, *Indici e cataloghi, Nuova Serie VI, Codices Graeci Manuscripti Bibliothecae Divi Marci Venetiarum*, vol. 1, pars prior (Rome, 1967), 282–83. Inside this series (which is not too different from the one in the Vat. Barb. Gr. 41), there are two interesting insertions: right before the last item, we read two other riddles, which are nowhere else connected with Basil Megalomytes. Both texts are more or less original versions of popular riddles, not too different from nos. 125 (*Μέσον οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς κρέμαμαι*, solution: *φῶς*) and 49 Milovanović (*Ἴππον ἰδὼν τρέχοντα ἐν τῷ λευκῷ πεδίῳ*, solution: *κονδύλιον*).

21 Mioni, *Codices*, 373: "Succedit (f. 263) aenigma <Michaelis Pselli> n. 38, vv. 1, 4, 5 (ibid., 570–571)"; the number (38) and the pages (570–71) are Cougny's.

22 See 213 and n. 14 above.

Ἄπετρός εἰμι καὶ κινούμενος δόμος,
 ἐν γῇ βεβηκώς, γῇ δὲ μὴ συνημμένος.
 Οὐ πηλός, οὐκ ἄσβεστος ἐξήγειρέ με,
 πρίων δὲ καὶ σκέπαρνον οὐ τέτμηκέ με,
 εἰ μὴ κορυφὴν καὶ τὰ βάθρα μου λέγεις.
 Φῶς ἔνδον ἔλκω, καίπερ ὦν πεφραγμένος.
 Λοξοὺς συνιστώντάς με κίονας φέρω.
 Τῶν κίωνων μου πάντοθεν κλονουμένων,
 τὸ σχῆμα σῶζων ἀβλαβὴς ἐστὼς μένω.
 Τὸ καινόν· εἰ με καὶ καταστρέψεις βίᾳ,
 οὐκ ἂν καταράξῃς με, σῶός εἰμί σοι,
 ἀνίσταμαι γὰρ καὶ πάλιν μένω δόμος.²³

The text of the riddle in Par. Gr. 1630 (the one printed by Boissonade among Basil Megalomytes' poems) is much shorter:

Ἄπετρός εἰμι καὶ κινούμενος δόμος·
 πρίων δὲ καὶ σκέπαρνος οὐκ οὐκ με τέμνει,
 εἰ μὴ κορυφὴν καὶ τὰ βάθρα μου μόνα.
 Εἰ γοῦν καταρράξεις με, σῶός εἰμί γε.²⁴

23 I have printed Westerink's text, which is not different from Boissonade's. A translation follows (unless otherwise specified, all the translations of the riddles are my own): "I am a movable house and have been built without stones; / I am fixed in the earth, although I am not joined with the earth. / Neither clay nor lime have raised me up, / neither saw nor axe have cut me, / apart from my top and my bottom. / I have light inside me, although I am well shut off. / The columns that hold me are slanting. / Even if my columns are shaken from side to side, / I always stand up without suffering any damage, keeping my aspect. / The strange thing is the following: not even if you turn me upside down / will you be able to destroy me; I will always be safe for you; / I rise up, and here I stay, as a house, for another time." The text of the version written in the second half of f. 227v of our MS is not very different from this one; after the title (Αἰνίγμα εἰς τένταν), we read the words Ἄπετρός εἰμι καὶ κινούμενος δόμος· ἐν γῇ βεβηκώς, γῇ δὲ μὴ συνημμένος. / Οὐ πηλός, οὐκ ἄσβεστος ἐξήγειρέ με· πρίων δὲ καὶ σκέπαρνος οὐ τέτμηκέ με, / εἰ μὴ κορυφὴν καὶ τὰ βάθρα μου λέγεις· φῶς ἔνδον ἔλκω, καίπερ ὦν πεφραγμένος. / Τῶν κίωνων μου πάντοθεν κλονουμένων· τὸ σχῆμα σῶζων ἀβλαβὴς ἐστὼς μένω, / ἀνίσταμαι γὰρ καὶ μένω πάλιν δόμος.

In this, and in all the other transcriptions of the riddles of Marc. Gr. 512, I have normalized word spaces, punctuation (as far as upper and lowercase are concerned), and orthography (mostly the iota subscript); letters in angle brackets restore text omitted by the scribe; letters in square brackets denote text wrongly written by the scribe; letters in round brackets restore abbreviated words.

24 "I am a movable house and have been built without stones; / neither saw nor axe cut me, / with just one exception, my top and

And even shorter is the one we read in Marc. Gr. 512 (henceforth, M):

Ἄπετρός εἰμι καὶ κινούμενος δόμος·
 πρίων δὲ καὶ σκέπαρνον οὐ τέτμηκέ με,
 εἰ μὴ κεφαλὴν καὶ τὰ βάθρα μου μόνα.

It is evident that this last version shows a closer relationship with Basil Megalomytes than with Michael Psellos. Apart from reading μου μόνα instead of μου λέγεις (l. 3), it is clearly a summary of the longer riddle attested in Psellos's "collection." But the question "Psellos or Megalomytes?" is a false problem—because the author of this riddle was very probably someone else.

This very riddle is, in fact, ascribed to three different writers. In a note to Psellos's version, Boissonade writes he has found the same riddle in another manuscript as well (Par. Gr. 2991A), in a shortened version (but not as short as in the "collection" of Megalomytes), ascribed to another author (Aulikalamos).²⁵ The poem is also present in the fifth section of the riddles of Eustathios Makrembolites, as edited by Treu, in a form that is very close to Psellos's.²⁶

my bottom. / Even if you turn me upside down, I will be safe." The riddle is not present in the other manuscript (Par. Gr. 968) used by Boissonade for his "collection" of Megalomytes' riddles.

25 One of the last pages (f. 443) of Parisinus Graecus 2991A (copied in 1419, according to Omont) contains seven riddles of Aulikalamos (on this poet, see below, 231, 233); the last five were edited by Boissonade under the heading Τοῦ Αὐλικαλάμου αἰνίγματα (*Anecdota Graeca*, 453–54); Boissonade chose not to publish the first two because they were quite similar to Psellos 11 and Megalomytes 32. The first one is our poem, in the following version: Ἄπετρός εἰμι καὶ κινούμενος δόμος· οὐ πηλός, οὐκ ἄσβεστος ἐξήγειρέ με. / Πρίων δὲ καὶ σκέπαρνος οὐ τέτμηκέ με, / εἰ μὴ κορυφὴν καὶ τὰ βάθρα μου μόνα. / Φῶς ἔνδον ἔλκω, καὶ πετρῶν πεφραγμένος. / Λοξοὺς συνιστώντάς με κίονας φέρω. / Τῶν κίωνων μου πάντοθεν κλονουμένων, / εἰ καὶ κατάξῃς με· σῶός εἰμί σοι· ἀνίσταμαι γάρ, καὶ πάλιν μένω δόμος. These are the differences from Psellos's riddle: three missing lines (2: ἐν γῇ βεβηκώς, γῇ δὲ μὴ συνημμένος; 9–10: τὸ σχῆμα σῶζων ἀβλαβὴς ἐστὼς μένω. / Τὸ καινόν· εἰ με καὶ καταστρέψεις βίᾳ.); σκέπαρνος instead of σκέπαρνον (as in Megalomytes); τὰ βάθρα μου μόνα instead of τὰ βάθρα μου λέγεις (almost as in Megalomytes); καὶ πετρῶν instead of καίπερ ὦν; εἰ καὶ κατάξῃς με instead of οὐκ ἂν καταράξῃς με.

26 Eustathios Makrembolites 5.2. Eustathios's riddles were first edited by I. Hilberg (*Eustathii Makrembolitae protonobilissimi de Hysmines et Hysminiae amoribus* [Vienna, 1876]), who used as his only source another Venetian manuscript from Bessarion's collection (Marc. Gr. 531), written in the fifteenth century; for his edition, Treu also collated the other three manuscripts that contain the majority

But all five poems that make up this section (including the riddle εἰς τένταν) can be found in another collection as well—and a collection that is very different from those we have met so far, because it is not a confused medley of poems written by different authors, but a poetry book whose authorship cannot be disputed. The collection I am speaking of is a book that assembles the poetic compositions of Christopher Mitylenaios, recently published by Marc de Groote:²⁷ here we find not only the riddle εἰς τένταν, but also the other four riddles that are present in the “collection” ascribed to Eustathios Makrembolites (that is, five out of the six—or seven—αἰνίγματα that were composed by Christopher).²⁸

Although such a large number of different attributions (the same poem ascribed to five distinct authors!) is, as far as riddles are concerned, very rare, the frequency of multiple attributions in the medieval manuscripts, together with the difficulty of dating the riddles themselves, makes it quite clear that, apart from a few

exceptions, it is impossible to ascribe with certainty a specific riddle to a specific poet.²⁹ Riddles needed to have an author (possibly a famous one) so as to enhance their value, but it is unlikely that the ascribed author had truly composed them. Basil Megalomytes and Eustathios Makrembolites are likely to have simply collected a wide array of riddles under their names and doubtless added some new riddles that they themselves composed according to the schemes of the older ones (an inference that is strengthened by the close similarities of many riddles that look like endless variations on the same theme).³⁰

We have just seen how the same riddle could appear in different shapes, with the same solution (the tent) and a changing array of clues. But there was another way to use a well-defined scheme as the starting point for another kind of variation. A good example is the **first** riddle of the Megalomytes series of Marc. Gr. 512:

Θάλασσαν οἰκῶ καὶ βροτοῖς πέλω βρώμα.
Τοῖς γράμμασι κέκλημαι † πέντε ἐμῶν †.
Εἰ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἀφελεῖς μου τὸ γράμμα,
τοῖς τέκτοσι μάθης με φίλτατον ἔργον.
Εἰ δὲ καὶ τὸ δεύτερον ἐξελεῖς γράμμα,
τῶν πέντε αἰσθήσεων εὗρης με μίαν.
Εἰ δ' αὖ τὸ τρίτον ἐξελεῖς τῶν γραμμάτων,
ἰσχὺν εὐρήσεις καὶ δύναμιν καὶ σθένος.³¹

of Eustathios's “collection” (Var. Gr. 1314 and 1341, Ambr. Gr. O 123 sup.). On this mysterious writer, see below, 237. The slight differences between Michael Psellos and Eustathios Makrembolites follow: line 3, Psellos σκέπαρνον and Makrembolites σκέπαρνος; line 8, P. μου and M. μοι; line 10, P. καταστρέψεις and M. συγκαταστρέψεις; line 11, P. καταράξης and M. καταρράξης; line 12 P. πάλιν μένω and M. μένω πάλιν.

27 *Christophori Mitylenaii Versuum variorum Collectio Cryptensis* (Turnhout, 2012). This welcome edition supersedes the editions of A. Rocchi (*Codices Cryptenses seu Abbatiae Cryptae Ferratae in Tusculano* [Rome, 1884]; see also idem, *Versi di Cristoforo Patrizio editi da un codice della monumentale Badia di Grottaferrata* [Rome, 1887]) and E. Kurtz (*Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios* [Leipzig, 1903]). The main witness of Christopher's book is *Cryptensis Z α XXIX*, written at the end of the thirteenth century; see P. Canart, “Le livre grec en Italie méridionale sous les règnes normand et souabe: aspects matériels et sociaux,” *Scrittura e Civiltà* 2 (1978): 156, n. 134.

28 The Christophorean riddles present in Makrembolites' “collection” are 111 (organ: Αἰνίγμα εἰς τὸ ὄργανον δι' ἡρωικῶν), 71 (tent: Αἰνίγμα εἰς τὴν τένταν), 56 (hours: Αἰνίγμα εἰς τὰς ἐν τῷ ὥρολογίῳ ὥρας), 47 (snow: Αἰνίγμα εἰς τὴν χιόνα—for the text of this riddle, see below, 227) and 21 (scale: Αἰνίγμα εἰς τὸν ζυγὸν ἥτοι τὸ ζύγιον). The missing riddles are 35 (rainbow or bow: Αἰνίγμα εἰς τὴν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἴριν ἥτοι τὸ τόξον) and 137 (sponge: Εἰς τὸν σπόγγον); the first (13 Milovanović) is also present in Basil Megalomytes' “collection” (41 Boissonade); the title of the second (69 Milovanović) does not contain the word αἰνίγμα, but it is clearly a riddle. Three riddles of Christopher (scale, hours, and tent) can also be found in Psellos's “collection”: they are Milovanović 71 (Psellos 49 W), Milovanović 76 (Psellos 52 W), and Milovanović 80 (Psellos 45 W).

29 Apart from those attributed to Christopher, other riddles whose authorship is sure are 65 Milovanović (John Geometres, see below, 235), 30 Milovanović (John Mauroπους, see below, 220), and the first three riddles of Psellos's “collection” (5, 35, and 10 Milovanović); see also below, 225. The problems raised by the authorship of most Byzantine riddles are briefly discussed by Zandrea, “Enigmistica bizantina,” 148–152.

30 On the name of the otherwise unknown Basil Megalomytes, see Al. Cameron, “Michael Psellus and the Date of the Palatine Anthology,” *GRBS* 11 (1970): 342 (with n. 8); on Makrembolites, see Treu, *Eustathii*, 21–22. On the different case of (Theodore) Aulikalamos, another poet-collector, see below, 231.

31 F. 263r, col. 1, lines 7–14: “I live in the sea and I am food for the mortals. / My name has five letters. / If you cut the letter of my head, / you will know that I am a thing most beloved by the carpenters. / If you take away also the second letter, / you will find out that I am one of the five senses. / And if you take away the third letter as well, / you will find out that I am strength, power, and vigor.” A syllable is missing at the end of line 2.

The solution of the riddle is a series of progressive answers that follow the same pattern we saw in *AP* 14.105: the first word is *καρίς* (“shrimp”); if we remove its first letter (the “head”), we have *ἄρίς* (“drill”); if we remove the second, we have *ρίς* (“nose,” the organ of one of the five senses); if we remove the third, we have *ἰς* (“strength”).

Mioni identifies the poem by noting that it coincides with a riddle that is present in the “collection” of Basil Megalomytes.³² This is true—but only if we consider the four progressive solutions. Let us look at the text edited by Boissonade:

Θάλασσαν οἰκῶ, καὶ βροτοῖς βρώσις πέλω.
 Ἄν δ' ἀφέλης μου τὸ κατ' ἀρχὰς στοιχείον,
 δόκιμον εὐρήσεις με ταῖς τεχνουργίαις.
 εἰ γοῦν ἀφαιρήσεις καὶ μετὰ τόδε
 τὸ δεύτερον, νόει με βρότειον μέλος·
 εἰ δ' αὖ τὸ τρίτον ἐξέλης τῶν γραμμάτων,
 ἴδης φέρον με ῥώσεως σημασίαν.³³

Though the solutions are the same, the definitions are completely different: the *ἄρίς* is no longer “a thing most beloved by the carpenters,” but something famous for the things it makes with its work; the *ρίς* is no longer one of the five senses, but, more appropriately, a part of the human body; instead of “strength, power, and vigor,” *ἰς* is just “the sign of strength.”

Such variations are a quite common feature in the text of Byzantine riddles. Since a riddle was a kind of popular poem (at least in its widespread diffusion), it might invite an almost infinite number of changes, since every user could create his own variations in order to give new life to an old text, to make a notorious riddle more difficult, or to display his inventiveness. These variations (which are not to be confused with

textual variants) were so common that we should not be surprised to learn that there is a third riddle with the same solution (*καρίς*), different both from the one of Marc. Gr. 512 and from those of Par. Gr. 968 and 1630. According to the heading we read in the manuscript, its author is Aulikalamos:

Ἐνάλιον πέφυκα μικρόν τι ζῶον.
 Ἄν γοῦν ἐξέλης τῶν γραμμάτων τὸ πρῶτον,
 εὐχρηστον εὐρήσεις με ταῖς ξυλουργίαις.
 Εἰ δ' αὖ καὶ τὸ δεύτερον προσαφαιρήσεις,
 εὐχρηστον εὐρήσεις με τῶν βροτῶν μέλος·
 εἰ δὲ καὶ τρίτον τὴν ἐμὴν κάραν τέμης,
 εὐρὴς χρησιμεύοντα πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις.³⁴

We are, without a doubt, in the presence of the same riddle, with the same solution(s); its structure is less refined, though, as shown by the monotony of the construction, with the repetition of the first part of lines 3 and 5. We would not be mistaken if we stated that, for some beloved riddles (and the “shrimp” riddle was one of those), every manuscript had its own variations. This riddle can be read in three other manuscripts as well—and, in each one, we find something more or less different. The versions we find in Pal. Gr. 116 and Cremonensis 160 present a very peculiar clue in the last line: Pal. Gr. 116 has *ἄριστον εὐρήσεις με ταῖς στραταρχίαις*, while Cremonensis 160 has *ἄριστον εὐρήσεις με ταῖς στρατηγίαις*; the utility of “strength” (*ἰς*) for those who have reached a high rank in the army is never attested in the other versions of the riddle.³⁵ The version we find in Par. Gr. 864 is very interesting too, because we find it in the manuscript that is consid-

32 Riddle 11 in Boissonade's edition, epigram 54 in Cougny's appendix, *ainigma* 110 in Milovanović's collection.

33 “I live in the sea and I am food for mortals. / If you take away the letter that is at my beginning, / you will find out that I am famous for the things I make with my work. / If, after this letter, you will take away / the second as well, be aware that I am a part of the human body. / But if you take away also the third of my letters, / you will see that I bring with me the sign of strength.” Boissonade's text comes from the union of the texts he had read in the two Parisian MSS: at line 4, Par. Gr. 1630 has *ἀφαιρήσεις*; at line 6, Par. Gr. 968 has *ἐξέλοις*.

34 Aulikalamos 3 Boissonade: “I am a small sea-animal. / If you take the first letter, / you will find out I am useful for working the wood. / If you take away the second as well, / you will find out I am a useful part of the human body. / If you cut my head for the third time, / you might find out I am useful for all human beings.” The MS is Par. Gr. 2991A (n. 25 above).

35 On the four riddles of Pal. Gr. 116, see n. 15 above. On the fourteen riddles of Cremonensis 160, see the detailed description of the content of this very interesting MS written at the beginning of the fifteenth century, as presented in M. Manfredini, “Un codice copiato da Isidoro di Kiev: Cremon. 160,” *AttiPont* 51 (2002): 247–80; see also D. Harlfinger, *Codices Cremonenses Graeci*, in *I manoscritti greci tra riflessione e dibattito*, ed. G. Prato, Atti del V colloquio internazionale di paleografia greca (Cremona, 4–10 ottobre 1998) (Florence, 2000), 2:765–66.

ered the direct source of the Prodomenean section that precedes our riddles. It is surely intriguing that, after the same poem (the *carmen in Manuelem Anemam*), both manuscripts have the same riddle; it is even more engaging that both versions are very close (but not identical, as we shall see).

This is the text we read at the bottom of f. 232v of the Parisian manuscript (henceforth, P):

Θάλασσαν οἰκῶ καὶ βροτοῖς βρώμα πέλω.
Τοῖς γράμμασι κέκλημαι πέντε καὶ μόνον.
Εἰ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἀφελεῖς μου τὸ γράμμα,
τοῖς τέκτοσι μάθης με φίλτατον ἔργον.
Εἰ δὲ καὶ τὸ δεύτερον ἐξελεῖς γράμμα,
τῶν πέντε αἰσθήσεων εὕρης με μίαν.

There are three differences. At line 1, P has πέλω βρώμα (the same order we find in M), but a second hand has inserted the signs α' and β' above the line, to indicate that the order of the two words must be changed.³⁶ The second difference lies at line 2, where P has the metrically correct reading πέντε καὶ μόνον (instead of the wrong πέντε ἐμῶν we read in M). But the third difference is the most significant: the version of P is clearly incomplete, because the third clue is missing; the scribe did not write the last two lines of the riddle, probably because there was not enough space—which means that, if the copyist of Marc. Gr. 512 used Par. Gr. 854 for the text of Theodore Prodromos's poems, he had to take his riddles from another manuscript.³⁷

Before leaving this riddle, there is still one significant question to discuss: the solutions of the αἰνίγματα. Modern editors of riddles do not always need to rack their brains to solve them, because the solutions are sometimes written down in the manuscripts. This is, for example, the case with our riddle, because the copyist has written its solution (καρίς) with red ink before the first line, to the right of the two horizontal strokes

that separate the beginning of the riddle section from the end of Prodromos's poems.³⁸ This good fortune does not happen all of the time, though: the solution to the **second** riddle is missing—and it is also missing in the Par. Gr. 1630, which Boissonade used for his edition. But the French scholar was able to find the three solutions to this quite complicated riddle, based also on the numeric value of the Greek alphabet: ρίς ("nose"), ῥίνες ("nostrils"), ἰς ("strength").³⁹

On the contrary, we have the solution to the **third** riddle: ἄρτος (bread) is clearly written in red ink right under the first line, at the bottom of the first column.⁴⁰ The solution of the **fourth** riddle is missing

38 The solution καρίς is written in Pal. Gr. 116, Cremonensis 160, and Par. Gr. 854 as well; in Cremonensis 160 the copyist has also written the other three solutions (ἄρίς, ρίς, ἰς).

39 Boissonade succeeded in finding a solution through the correction of the text of Par. Gr. 1630: at line 5, instead of writing καὶ τετράκις τρίς καὶ πάλιν δις τὰ δύο, he printed καὶ τετράκις δις καὶ πάλιν δις τὰ πέντε ("scripsi δις, et pro δύο recepi variantem πέντε, ut fiat numerus 310, quae summa est arithmetica nominis quaesiti, ρίς"). The text of the riddle in our manuscript (f. 263r, col. 1, lines 15–24) is the following: Γράμμασι τρισὶ συλλαβὴν φέρω μίαν. / Ἐχω δ' ἀριθμὸν ἐννέα δις ἐπτάκις / καὶ δώδεκα τρίς καὶ δεκάκις τρίς τρία / καὶ πεντάκις ἕξ καὶ τοὺς πέντε δις πάλιν / καὶ τετράκις δις καὶ πάλιν δις τὰ δύο. / Ὁ γοῦν ἀναγνὸς τὴν γραφὴν, ἀντιστρόφως, / [κ]ὰν τῷ μέσῳ γράμματι προσθήσεις δύο, / εὕρης πνοῆς ὄχημα τῆς βιοτρόφου. / Ἐκ τῶν τριῶν δὲ γράμματι τὸ πρῶτον ξέσας, / τῶν ἀρετῶν γνοίης με τῶν πρώτων μίαν ("I have one syllable made of three letters. / My number is nine two and seven times; / twelve three times and three thirty times; / and six five times and five twice; / and four twice and again two twice. / If, after having read the digit, contrariwise / add two letters on the middle, / you might find the carrier of the breath of life. / But after having wiped out the first of the three letters, / you will find out that I am the first of the virtues"). The other differences from Boissonade's text (henceforth, B) are not very significant: line 1 φέρω μίαν M, μίαν φέρω B; line 7 προσθήσεις M, προσθήσει B; line 8 εὕρης M, εὕρη B; line 9 γράμματι τὸ πρῶτον M, γραμμάτων πρῶτον B.

40 The text of the riddle in our manuscript (f. 263r, col. 1, line 25, col. 2, lines 1–3): Ἀπνοὺς μέν εἰμι, τοὺς βροτοὺς δὲ ῥωννύω / τὴν κλῆσιν ἔχων εὐαριθμητὸν πάννυ / ἀσπάζομαι δὲ τὸ τριακῶς δις μόνη, / δις τριάκοντα καὶ μίαν πρὸς τοῖς δέκα ("I am breathless, but I give strength to mortals; / it is very easy to count my name; / alone I embrace thirty times twice, / twice thirty, and one right after ten"). The differences from Boissonade's text are again very small: line 2 ἔχων M, ἔσχον B; line 3 ἀσπάζομαι δὲ τὸ τριακῶς δις μόνη M, ἀσπάζομαι γὰρ τὸ τριακῶς δις μόνον B. The riddle can be found in Eustathios Makrembolites' "collection" as well (no. 3 of the third section; the text printed by Treu is almost identical to Boissonade's); this same version can also be read in a MS that belonged to the headmaster of a commercial high school (see N. Kytion,

36 See De Gregorio, "Teodoro Prodromo" (n. 16 above), 195 n. 5.

37 Ibid., for the claim that, right after the Prodomenean section, Par. Gr. 854 has a series of riddles ("Poi, in immediata successione ai carmi di Prodromo, abbiamo una serie di Αἰνίγματα (ff. 232v [linn. 27–30 delle due coll.] – 233r), di cui il primo, in dodecasillabi, si identifica qui come l'*Aenigma in aquilam* di Basilio Megalomite"). The heading that precedes the "shrimp" riddle seems, in fact, to be a plural noun (Αἰνίγματα), but the prose text written on the following page (f. 233r) has nothing to do with riddles.

too: nowhere do we read the word σῦς (pig).⁴¹ But, again, we have the solution to the **fifth** riddle: the word τέντα (tent) is written in red ink in the right margin soon after the first line of the mutilated version of the riddle.⁴²

What does this mean? Why do only half of the riddles in our manuscript have the solutions?⁴³ The solution is a fundamental part of an enigma. A riddle without a solution is like a door without a key; if it lacks a solution, a riddle cannot be used (exactly like a door, which cannot be opened if there is no key—not any key, of course, but the right one). Since a riddle was an instrument used to engage playfully with other people, the person who proposed a riddle to other people had to know the solution (according to our metaphor, he had to own the key needed to open the door). But where did such a person get that key? If he had composed the riddle himself, he of course knew its solution; but if he had taken the riddle from somewhere else (a book, for instance), the book had to hold the solution. This is what happens with Latin riddles, for instance: all the manuscripts of Symphosius offer the solutions to the riddles, which are written before the riddles themselves as though they were their titles. The same structure can be seen in the manuscripts of the English poets, from Aldhelm to Tatwine and Eusebius. The reason is clear: since Symphosius's collection was composed and assembled in order to give the participants at a banquet a good number (a hundred) of instruments to test the intelligence of the other guests (as is alluded in the preface to the work), it had to offer the solutions as well—

“Βυζαντινὰ αἰνίγματα,” *Kypriaka Chronika* 3 [1925]: 128–40, in particular 139 n. 38).

41 The text of the riddle in our manuscript (f. 263r, col. 2, lines 4–9): “Ἐχω τρία γράμματα καὶ τι τυγχάνω. / Ἐνὸς στεροῦμαι ταῦτὸν τυγχάνω πάλιν. / Οὐκ ἔστι καινόν, ἄλλο τι κρείττον μάθε· / τὴν ἐσχατιὰν τῶν τριῶν μου γραμμάτων / ἔχω κατ’ ἀρχὴν τὴν μέσην ἔχω μέσην, / καὶ τὴν κατ’ ἀρχὴν ἀντὶ τοῦ τέλους φέρω” (“I have three letters and I am something. / If I am deprived of one letter, I happen to be the same thing. / It is nothing special, but learn this more interesting feature of mine: / I can have the last of my three letters / in the place of the first, / I keep the central one in my center, / and I can bring the first in the place of the last”). The differences from Boissonade's text are the following: line 2 ταυτὸν M, ταυτὸ B; line 5 ἀρχὴν M, ἀρχὰς B.

42 For the text of this riddle (f. 263r, col. 1, lines 10–12), see 215 above.

43 The same alternation characterizes the following other riddles as well, as we shall see.

it would otherwise have been quite useless, or at least very difficult to use.⁴⁴

But the situation of Greek riddles seems quite different and, at first sight, confused.⁴⁵ In the majority of Greek manuscripts, the solutions to riddles can either be always present (as in Utinensis Gr. 4), or always absent (as in Leidensis Vulc. 64), or partially present (as in our manuscript, or in Athous Dionysii 347);⁴⁶ when the solutions are present, in most cases they have been added by a hand that is not the same as the one that wrote the text of the riddles.

One of the most interesting exceptions is Parisinus Suppl. Gr. 690, a manuscript in which we find some short sections of riddles scattered among the other texts of this miscellaneous book; at f. 144v and 145r, there is a group of six riddles, all but the first endowed with their solutions. The solutions of the five titled riddles are all correct: εἰς πλοῖον ὡς ἐξ ἑτέρου (“A riddle on a boat, as if it had been uttered by someone else”), τὸ ζύγιον (“The scale”), εἰς τὴν χίονα (“A riddle on the snow”), εἰς τὰς ἐν τῷ ὥρολογίῳ ὥρας (“A riddle on the hours of the clock”), and εἰς τὴν τένταν (“A riddle on the tent”). We have already met some of these riddles: the last four were written by Christopher Mitylenaios. But the author of the first titled riddle is also a poet whose name we know,

44 The goal of the English collections was likely different (Aldhelm says he wrote them to show what could be done with the Latin hexameter, see his *praefatio*, lines 25–27), but the shadow of Symphosius's model influenced the structure of the more recent works. On the relationship between Greek and Latin riddles, see Č. Milovanović-Barhan, “Aldhelm's Enigmata and Byzantine Riddles,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 22 (1993): 51–64.

45 At least as far as medieval MSS are concerned, because in ancient editions the situation was likely different. See D. L. Page's remarks on the Hellenistic oyster riddle witnessed by P. Louvr. inv. 7733 verso (*Further Greek Epigrams* [Cambridge, 1981], 469–73); on this riddle, see now also J. Kwapisz, “Were There Hellenistic Riddle Books?” in Kwapisz, Petrain, and Szymański, *The Muses at Play* (n. 1 above), 164–65; and C. Martis, “L'enigma del PLouvre inv. 7733 verso: l'epigramma dell'ostrica,” *Studi di Egittologia e di Papirologia* 10 (2013): 117–50.

46 Utinensis Gr. 4 (fifteenth century) was one of the two MSS used by Westerink for his edition of Psellos's “collection” (the other was Parisinus Gr. 968, the MS first edited by Boissonade); in Leidensis Vulc. 64 (sixteenth century, another MS mentioned by Westerink in his edition of Psellos's poems), all Psellos's riddles are intermingled with most of Megalomytes'; the many riddles of Athous Dionysii 347 (sixteenth century) were published by S. Lambros in 1885 (“Βυζαντινὰ αἰνίγματα,” *Δελτ. Ἐτ. Ἑλλ.* 2 [1885]: 152–66) and, after his death, in 1923 (“Αἰνίγματα,” *Νέος Ἑλλ.* 17 [1923]: 202–17).

because the composition can also be found in Vat. Gr. 676, the manuscript that holds the poetic production of John Mauropous.⁴⁷

This identification (which is strengthened by the presence of two other Christophorean riddles—the organ and the rainbow—in other pages of the same MS), together with the age of the manuscript itself, deserves our attention.⁴⁸ Par. Suppl. Gr. 690, written in the first or in the second half of the twelfth century, is older than all the other volumes we have mentioned so far, and also than the others we are going to mention in the remainder of this article, which are seldom earlier than the fourteenth century.⁴⁹ Should we guess that the presentation of the riddles of Par. Suppl.

Gr. 690, with the solution clearly marked as the title, was the rule, as in the presentation of the Latin riddles? This would be a likely guess, even though we might ask why the scribe who wrote the riddles present in Par. Suppl. Gr. 384, which is two centuries older than Par. Suppl. Gr. 690, did not write their titles.⁵⁰ If this is true, then we might assume that the solutions, which had been present (since they were thought to be necessary) in the oldest manuscripts, were later removed in order to save space, probably because they had been seen just as titles, not as solutions, and were therefore considered to be superfluous. But, since the solution of a riddle is never superfluous, in later times, when the genre regained popularity, some rather clever copyists added the solutions in the margins, as in Utinensis 4, where the solutions were written in red ink by the same copyist;⁵¹ more often, the solutions seem to have been added by hands other than the copyist (and even by more than one hand, as in Vat. Gr. 889, where the solutions have been added by two hands different from that of Francesco Maturanzio); in some cases, it seems that every reader felt the need to add his own solution, as in this same manuscript, where, near the solution *πλοῖον* written in the left margin before the riddle, someone (probably a librarian) has added the word *nauis*.⁵²

This hypothesis does not solve every problem, though. One might ask why we do not find in our manuscript the solution to the fourth riddle (*σῦς*, a word that means the same animal even if it loses its initial), which was not very difficult to guess, since the pig is one

47 M. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Text and Contexts* (Vienna, 2003), 62, says that Vat. Gr. 676 was written “when Mauropous was still alive or shortly after his death” (between the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century) and calls it “a direct and faithful apograph of the original collection”; this statement is strengthened by the recent analysis of D. Bianconi, “‘Piccolo assaggio di abbondante fragranza.’ Giovanni Mauropode e il Vat. Gr. 676,” *JÖB* 61 (2011): 89–103. The text of this riddle (60 Lagarde) is as follows: ζῷόν τι πεζόν· ἀλλὰ νηκτὸν εὐρέθη. / ἔμψυχον· ἀλλ’ ἄψυχον. ἐμπνουν· ἀλλ’ ἀπνουν. / ἔρπον, βαδίζον, καὶ περτοῖς κεχρημένον. / ἄκουε καὶ θαύμαζε, καὶ δίδου λύσιν (“A new animal has been discovered: it has feet, but it swims; / it has life, but it is dead, it has breath but it does not respire; / it creeps, it walks and makes use of wings; / listen, be amazed, and give the solution”). In itself, the riddle is clear, but its title is not so: in Vat. Gr. 676, the poem bears the title *αἰνίγμα εἰς πλοῖον, ὡς ἐξ ἑτέρου*; the second part of the title is translated by R. Anastasi, *Giovanni Mauropode metropolita di Euchaita: Canzoniere* (Catania, 1984), 94, as “come per bocca altrui.” Such a translation (“as if it had been uttered by someone else”) would be much more persuasive if it were the solution itself (in this case, the boat) that defied the reader to unveil its hidden identity, as is quite usual in the majority of enigmatic epigrams; but, since the text of the riddle is not uttered by the boat, the weird expression should have a different meaning (probably connected with the following poem, 61 Lagarde, a violent *ad personam* attack that bears the title *εἰς τὸν τὸ αὐτὸ δι’ ἑτέρων ὡς ἑτερόν τι προβαλόντα*).

48 On these riddles, see 222 below.

49 The MS was brought from Mount Athos to Paris by Minoides Mynas in the nineteenth century; apart from our riddles, it contains many interesting works, such as Homer’s *Batrachomyomachia*, some orations of Isocrates, some dialogues of Lucian, the fables and the life of Aesop, and the *Philogelos*. The date of the MS is discussed by G. Rochefort, “Le Parisinus Suppl. Gr. 690,” *Scriptorium* 4 (1950): 3–17, who stated that it was written between 1075 and 1085, at the beginning of the Komnenos dynasty (a dating followed by Thierfelder and Dawe), but the majority of philologists and palaeographers (Perry, Irigoin, Follieri, De Gregorio, and Lauxtermann) prefer a more recent date (on this, and on the MS in general, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 329–33).

50 Par. Suppl. Gr. 384 (now in Paris, as its name shows) is the second, smaller part of the MS that holds the *Greek Anthology* (the first part, Pal. Gr. 23, is in Heidelberg). The fact that most of the titles are missing (and that, when they are not missing, they are written in the margins) might be explained by the peculiar story of this celebrated book, written by different copyists at different times; on its laborious composition and complicated structure, see Al. Cameron, *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford, 1993).

51 He even added some additional remarks: before the riddle 39 Westerink, instead of writing the simple solution (*ἀγκηνάρα ἢ μήκων*, “artichoke or poppy,” which we find in Par. Gr. 968), he embarks on a longer discussion (*φωνή ἐστιν ὡς οἶμαι· ἥς μ(ή)τηρ ἢ γλῶσσα· ἥς π(α)τήρ αὐθις ὁ νοῦς ἐνδον τῆς φωνῆς θεωρούμενος ἢ καὶ ὁ ἀήρ· δι’ οὗ ἢ φωνὴ τὴν γένεσιν ἔχει*). For a similar, more expanded solution, see below.

52 The riddle is John Mauropous 60 Lagarde (30 Milovanović = Psellos 48 Westerink); for its text, see n. 47 above. The solution written in Utinensis 4 and in Par. Gr. 968 (where the riddle is a part of Psellos’s “collection”) is *ναῦς*.

of the most common animals in Byzantine riddles. Did the copyist ignore it? Or, more simply, did he not find it in the manuscript he was copying? This is a possibility we cannot ignore, because, since solutions were often written in the margins of the pages, chances are they had been torn, or since they were often written in a paler ink (red, usually), chances are they had just faded away.⁵³

But the problem of the missing solutions can often be solved by the discovery of the solutions themselves—as has been done with some of the riddles of the *Palatine Anthology*, whose enigmatic epigrams provoked the intellect of many scholars, at least in those cases where the ancient writers had not transmitted the solution to us. But some riddles are still missing a certain solution: there has been a heated discussion over a few epigrams of the fourteenth book of the *Greek Anthology*; there has been a relentless debate between two Greek scholars about the solutions of some Byzantine riddles edited by Spyridon Lambros;⁵⁴ there can be many different impediments that keep scholars from finding the right solution to a riddle. This is so, for instance, in the case of the *sixth* riddle, the first unedited poem in this Venetian collection:

Τετρασύλλαβόν εἰμι, συντόμως νόει.
Τῶν δ' οὖν καταρχὰς τεττάρων τῶν γραμμάτων
ἔξω ριφθέντων καὶ διωχθέντων ὅλως,
τόπος καλοῦμαι φίλτατος τῶν ἐν πόλει.

F. 263r, col. 2, lines 13–16

Here is the poem's translation: "I have four syllables—think about it, quickly! If the first four initial letters are thrown away and completely eliminated, my name indicates the dearest place in town."

53 On the question of solutions, see also Milovanović, *Βυζαντινὰ αἰνίγματα* (n. 2 above), 11–13.

54 The controversy involved A. I. Spyridakis and I. E. Stamatoules: Spyridakis published the solutions he had devised for some riddles Lambros had edited without trying to give a solution: "Βυζαντιακὰ αἰνίγματα," *Ἐπετηρίς τοῦ Φιλολογικοῦ Συλλόγου Παρνασσῶ* 8 (1904): 187–95; Stamatoules criticized the (wrong) solutions of two riddles and suggested his own (correct) solutions in "Βυζαντιακὰ αἰνίγματα," *Ἐπετηρίς τοῦ Φιλολογικοῦ Συλλόγου Παρνασσῶ* 9 (1906): 130–32; Spyridakis wrote a second, nasty article, in which he tried to uphold his mistaken interpretations ("Βυζαντιακὰ αἰνίγματα," *Δελτ. Ἐτ. Ἑλλ.* 7 [1910]: 141–54).

Finding a solution on the basis of just these clues alone is very difficult, if not impossible, since they are so vague that the answers could be many, too many for a Byzantine riddle, which, like any αἰνίγμα, allows for a single solution. It would not be too hard to find a tetrasyllabic word that, through the loss of its first four letters, gives birth to a second word that indicates a most beloved place in Constantinople, the town *par excellence* (for a Byzantine monk, at least): if we assume that the speaking person is a man (the author of the riddle) and the place is the *forum* of the town (φόρος, a very rare word, but in a riddle this is not a problem), the solution might be a name ending in -φόρος, such as Νικηφόρος.

But the indication "I have four syllables" is too brief for a clue to a riddle, because every ambiguous sentence usually contains something else in addition to the simple number of the syllables or the letters that can lead the reader toward the right solution. Since this additional indication is missing here, we might think that the poem is somehow defective.

Finding the solution to a defective riddle is a mission impossible: if some enigmas do succeed in keeping their secrets when they are complete, it is easy to imagine how hard it is to find the answer to a problem when we are missing one or more bits of data. There is only one way to get through this impasse: to find the full version of the same riddle in another manuscript. Such a possibility is surely rare, but, in our case, we have been so lucky as to find not only one complete version, but even two. And—this is even rarer—the second version actually has the solution!

I noted above that at the fols. 144v and 145r of Par. Suppl. Gr. 690 we find a short section of six riddles; I have briefly discussed five of these riddles (one by John Mauropous and four by Christopher Mytilenaios), but it is now time to analyze the first one, whose *incipit* perfectly matches the first line of our riddle.⁵⁵ Here is its complete text:

Τετρασύλλαβόν εἰμι, συντόμως νόει.
Τῶν ὑστάτων δὲ συλλαβῶν ἀπωσμένων,
ὅλοις περισπούδαστον ὡς ἡδὺ πέλω.
Τῶν δ' οὖν καταρχὴν γραμμάτων τῶν τεσσάρων

55 On the other five riddles, see 214 above; Rochefort, *Parisinus*, 12, called them "devinettes jouant sur la valeur magique des mots" and added that he was working on an edition (which he never produced).

ἔξω ριφέντων καὶ διωχθέντων ὅλως,
τόπος καλοῦμαι φίλτατος τοῖς ἐν πόλει.
Τῶν τεσσάρων δὲ συλλαβῶν κεκραμμένων,
κλήσιν δίδωμι τοῖς βροτοῖς πληρεστάτην.

This version is much fuller. The four additional lines give us two further clues: first (lines 2–3, lost in the Venetian manuscript because of a trivial mistake of *saut du même au même*), we learn that “if the most extreme syllables are pushed away,” the tetrasyllabic word (the main solution) turns into something that is much beloved by everybody because it happens to be something sweet; second (lines 7–8), we know that “if the four syllables are mixed together,” the solution shows its fullest name.

The old and new clues make the riddle much easier, even though this is the only poem of the section without a title (the solution). But the title we clearly read just before the second version of the same poem copied by the same hand in f. 183 wipes out every difficulty. This second series of riddles comprise five poems. The first two are known from other sources as well: both the riddle on the organ (αἰνίγμα εἰς τὸ ὄργανον δι’ ἡρωικῶν) and that on the rainbow (αἰνίγμα εἰς τὴν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἱρὴν ἢ τὸ τόξον) come from the poetry book of Christopher Mytilenaios.⁵⁶ The fourth and the fifth poems are unedited;⁵⁷ our riddle is the third one, bearing the title ἄλλο ἦτοι φιλόσοφος.⁵⁸

The first solution, the sweetest thing, the most sought-after companion, is the “friend” (φίλος), the result of the elimination of the four last words; the second solution, the dearest place in town, is the “wise” (σοφός) place, the result of the elimination of the first four words—and such a place cannot be anything else than Ἀγία Σοφία, the most famous church

of Byzantium, built by Justinian in the sixth century; the third solution, the most complete version of the tetrasyllabic word, is the “philosopher” (φιλόσοφος), the result of the union of the former solutions.⁵⁹

The **seventh** riddle is somewhat similar to the previous one, since the first word is again indicated in a very elliptical way:

Μονὰς μέν εἰμι συλλαβῶν ὑπειργμένη
καὶ τριγράμματος, ἀλλὰ συντόμως νόει·
εἰ δ’ οὖν κάραν μου τῶν γραμμάτων ἐξέλῃς,
σώματος ἔξεις ἐστενωμένον μέρος.

F. 263r, col. 2, lines 17–20

3 ἐξέλεις Μ

What is this “compact unity of syllables, made by three letters”? The exhortation to solve the riddle (“Think about it, quickly!”) would be ineffective if we did not have the solution, because the second clue (“If you remove the head of my letters, you’ll have a narrow part of the body”) might apply to many parts of the human body. But, luckily for us, the copyist did add the solution in the right margin of the page, between the last line of riddle 6 and the first line of riddle 7; it is written in red, as usual; though it is not clearly readable, its first letter is without any doubt a big φ, while what follows seems to be a σ. We might then accept Mioni’s reading, φῶς: this is the monosyllabic word made of three letters, a word that, when losing its head (the first letter), becomes ὤς—that is, the Doric and Hellenistic form for οὖς (“ear”).⁶⁰

The use of a less common form is not a problem for riddle composers. Two Byzantine αἰνίγματα, each present in Michael Psellos’s and Basil Megalomytes’ “collections” (though in a different form), require the same form: from Ἔρως (“Eros”), they go first to Ρῶς (“Russian”) and then to ὤς, called “a part of the body” (Psellus: σώματος . . . μέρος) and “a part of mortals”

56 Christopher Mytilenaios 111 (38 Milovanović) and 35 (13 Milovanović). The riddle of the rainbow was also published by Boissonade (Basil Megalomytes 41) and Cougny (twice: 46 and 75).

57 The title of the fourth is ἄλλο εἰς τὸν κηρόν; that of the fifth is ἄλλο εἰς τὸ φανάριον.

58 All the riddles present in Par. Suppl. Gr. 690 can be also found in another Parisian MS (Par. Suppl. Gr. 1249), a book with a very complicated structure; see C. Astruc and M.-L. Concasty, *Catalogue des manuscrits grecs, Le supplément grec* (Paris, 1960), 3:459. They were written on fols. 6v and 7r by the hand of Minoides Mynas, the same Greek scholar who had brought Par. Suppl. Gr. 690 from Mount Athos to the Bibliothèque Nationale.

59 According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the verb κεράννυμι means “mingle and fuse together” (*De compositione verborum* 22.14). In our riddle, the crasis φιλόσοφος is the result of the union of φίλος and σοφός, with the elision of the last sigma of φίλος and the first sigma of σοφός.

60 See, for instance, Theocritus, *Idylls* 11.32, P. Petr. 3.33, P. Gizeh 10388.23, and P. Oxy. 50.3548 (= TM 62800).

(Megalomytes: βροτῶν μέλος).⁶¹ Moreover, a riddle of Athous Dionysii 347 seems to have the same couple of solutions:

Ἐγὼ ποθεῖνδον ὥσπερ οὐδὲν ὑπάρχον,
ἔχω συνιστώσαν με συλλαβὴν μίαν·
ταύτην δὲ συμπληροῦσι γράμματα τρία,
ὧν ἐξαλείψας τὸ κατ' ἀρχὴν εὐρήσεις
μέλος παρευθὺς σώματος βρωτησίου.⁶²

Even if the solution to the riddle is not present in the manuscript, there cannot be any doubt that the two words are φῶς and ὦς.

The **eighth** riddle does not present problems:

Τριγράμματος μὲν εἰμι τετράπους δ' ὄμω·
φύσει τε μικρός, ἀλλὰ τῇ βλάβῃ μέγας.
Ἄν οὖν τέμνεις μου τὴν κάραν τῶν γραμμάτων,
<φ>ωνοῦντ' ἀπε[ι]ργάσεις με καὶ μεῖζω[ν] φύσει.

F. 263r, col. 2, lines 21–24

The riddle asks: “I have three letters but four feet; although my body is small, big are the damages I cause. If you cut the head of my letters, you’ll make me speak—and you’ll give me a bigger body.”

Thanks to the solution clearly written in red in its usual position (the right margin of the page, between the last line of riddle 7 and the first line of riddle 8) and to the many other similar riddles that share the same couple of solutions, it is easy to understand what the author meant: the small and noxious animal is the mouse (μῦς); the big and speaking one is the pig (ὑς).⁶³

61 Psellos 43 Westerink (91 Milovanović) and Megalomytes 25 Boissonade (92 Milovanović).

62 Lambros, “Αἰνίγματα” (n. 46 above), 213 n. 49 (127 Milovanović). Other riddles with the solution φῶς (but with completely different texts) are 61, 125, and 126 Milovanović.

63 The edited riddles with the same solutions are the following: 108 Milovanović (Basil Megalomytes 32 Boissonade: Ζῶν τι μικρόν εἰμι τῶν οὐ βρωσίμων· / τρία μόνον γράμματα τῇ κλήσει φέρω· / ἂν γοῦν τὸ πρῶτον ἐξέλης τῶν γραμμάτων, / ζῶν μέγα γνοίης με τῶν ἐδωδίμων; see also Kytion, “Βυζαντινὰ αἰνίγματα,” 136 n. 21); 109 Milovanović (Ζωύφιον κάκιστον καὶ κερδαλέον / οἰκοῦν θαλάμους ἀδῆλως κεκρυμμένους, / κλοπαῖς, φθοραῖς πάσαις φιλοῦν κακουργίαις,

The **ninth** riddle is at first puzzling:

Λεπτὸν νόησον καὶ διαυγῇ τὴν φύσιν,
μόνα δύο γράμματα προσκεκτημένον.
Εἰ προστεθῇ δὲ καὶ τρίτον τούτοις, τότε
τρόμω σε τάχει φεύγε μὴ καταλάβω.

F. 263r, col. 2, lines 25–26;

F. 263v, col. 1, lines 1–2

3 τρίτοις M

The translation is quite easy (“Be aware that my body is thin and translucent, and that my name is made by two letters only. But if you add a third letter to these three, run away quickly unless you want to be caught by me”), but the solution is not so easy, mostly because the indication added by the copyist in the usual place (again, the right margin of the page, between the last line of riddle 8 and the first line of riddle 9) is problematic. According to Mioni, the solution is θώραξ. But, apart from the fact that such an answer does not make sense (a corslet?), the

/ τριγράμματῶ τε συλλαβῇ κεκλημένον. / Τὸ πρῶτον ζημιωθὲν τῶν τε γραμμάτων / ἀμείνεται εἰς μεῖζον ζῶον αὐτίκα / ἔλαττον τὴν κακουργίαν κεκτημένον; see Lambros, “Βυζαντινὰ αἰνίγματα,” 160 n. 12); Georgius ἀφυῆς (Ζῶον αἰσχρὸν πέφυκα ἐκ τῶν ἐλαχίστων / σώων πεφυκὸς καὶ λίαν ἐρριμμένον, / ἄχρηστον ὄντως καὶ κατὰ πάντα λόγον. / Ἦν οὖν κεφαλὴν τὴν ἐμὴν τεμῖν θέλης, / ἐνῆδονον εὐρῆς με κάκ τῶν χρησίμων / καὶ μάχιμον κατὰ πάντα λόγον, not quoted by Milovanović, see A. I. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Noctes Petropolitanæ* [St. Petersburg, 1913], 203, who attributes it to an ἀφυῆς Euthymios); a so-called Anonymous Patrician (Κλήσιν ἐμὴν δηλοῦσι γράμματα τρία, / ἐνὸς δὲ τούτων ἐκκοπέντος θῆρ μὲνω. / Εἰ δ' αὖ προσθεῖς τῶν ἀφώνων γραμμάτων, / εὐρῆς με ζῶον ἡμερώτατον λίαν, see S. Lambros, “Τὰ ὑπ' ἀριθμὸν PIZ' καὶ ΠΓ' κατάλοιπα,” *Νέος Ἑλλ.* 16 [1922]: 50, vv. 7–10). The riddle (a very popular one) can be found also in the following MSS: Pal. Gr. 116 (see 213 above: Ζῶν τι μικρόν εἰμι τῶν οὐ βρωσίμων· / τρία γράμματα τὴν κλήσιν λέγω φέρον· / ἂν γοῦν τὸ πρῶτον ἀφέλης τῶν γραμμάτων, / μέγα ζῶον εὐρῆς με τῶν ἐδωδίμων); Par. Gr. 2877 (a fairly recent MS, written in the sixteenth century: at f. 29r, after the title τοῦ μῦδος τὸ ὄνομα, we read ζῶν τι μικρόν εἰμι, οὐκ εἰμι τῶν βροσῶν [sic]. / Τρία γράμματα, τῇ κλήσει [sic] φέρω. / Ὁ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἀριθμὸς ἐξακόσια σὺν τετράκις / δεκάδοις [sic], with a play on the numeric value of the three letters that form the word μῦς); Par. Gr. 2991A (attributed to Aulikalamos, see n. 25 above); Athous Xenophontis 51 (an even more recent MS, written in the eighteenth century; see S. Lambros, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts on Mount Athos* [Cambridge, 1895], 1:67); Cairo 65 (f. 24v, see L. Sophronios, “Νέα βιβλία καὶ δημοσεύματα,” *Ρωμανὸς ὁ Μελωδὸς* 1 [1933]: 154). For other occurrences, see also T. E. Evangelides, “Πατριάρχου Ἀλεξανδρείας Γερασίου τοῦ Σπαρταλιώτου αἰνίγματα,” *Ἑκκ. Φάρ.* 31 (1932): 297 n. 9.

word is too long, because there can be no doubt that we are looking for a word with two letters and another one with three. And, as a matter of fact, the red letters written by the copyist seem to me just three: a θ, a ω, and a third small sign that looks like a cross. Let us put this matter temporarily aside (I will return to this riddle below) and move to the following riddle.

The **tenth** riddle is one of the cleverest in the whole collection—and, even if the copyist did not write down its solution (was it too difficult for him?), the answer I am proposing seems to me correct beyond any doubt:

Ὁμωνυμοῦντα δύο γράμματα μόνα
φέρουσι δύο συλλαβαὶ τῶν γραμμάτων
στοιχεῖα πέντε πανσόφως κεκτημένων.
Καὶ τοῦ μὲν ἔστι μέτρον ἐκ πυρριχίου,
τοῦ δ' ἐκ τροχαίου, καὶ νόει μοι συντόμως.
Τὸ μὲν πνοὴ τίς ἐστιν ἡνεμωμένη.
Ὁ δὲ τροχαῖος, σώματος μέρος φίλον.
Οὐπὲρ τὸ πρῶτον ἀφελὼν τῶν γραμμάτων,
εὕρης Ὁμήρου στρατιώτη<ν> γενναῖον.

F. 263v, col. 1, lines 3–11
3 κεκτημένον M || 4 πυριχείου M ||
6 ἡνεμωμένη M

The translation is as follows: “This riddle built in a very learned way has as its solutions two bisyllabic words; each word has five letters, and two of these letters are the same. The meter of the first word comes from the pyrrhic, while the meter of the second one comes from the trochee. Think about it, quickly! The first word is a blowing wind; the trochee is a part of the body. If you take away the first letter from this second word, you will find a brave soldier of Homer.”

Despite its awkward syntactic structure, the first sentence is clear: the solutions are two words of five letters, both bisyllabic, in each of which there are two letters that have the same name. The only difference is the length of their first syllable: the first word (the pyrrhic) has two short syllables, while the second (the trochee) has one long and one short syllable. Consequently, their meaning is also different; if the first one is a wind, the second is a part of the human body (a “dear” part, a φίλον μέρος, a typical Homeric expression). I guess that

the first one is Νότος, the south wind, while the second is νῶτος, the back;⁶⁴ the courageous Homeric soldier can only be Ὦτος (“Otus”), an Achaean warrior from Cyllene, “comrade of Phyleus’s son and leader of the great-hearted Epeians.”⁶⁵

The **eleventh** riddle also lacks a written solution. But it is not difficult to find, because the conundrum is known from many other sources (although its structure is quite different):

Δάκνω σε καὶ τρέμω σε καὶ τί τυγχάνω;
Τριῶν δὲ κύκλος συλλαβῶν με δεικνύει.
Ἄν οὖν τὸ πρῶτον ἐξέλῃς τῶν γραμμάτων,
παύλαν πόνων ἴδῃς με καὶ ζωῆς τέλος·
εἰ δ' οὖν ξέσῃς μου καὶ τὸ δεύτερον πλέον,
τήρημα δείξεις ἄκρον τῶν ἐν ταῖς ζάλαις·
εἰ καὶ τὸ τρίτον, ἄνθος εἰς θυμηδῖαν·
αὐθις δὲ καὶ τέταρτον εἴπερ ἐξέλῃς,
αἰδῖον με καὶ αἰεὶ ζῶων ἴδῃς.

F. 263v, col. 1, lines 12–20
4 καὶ ζωῆς καὶ τέλος M || 6 ἀλαζωνείας M⁶⁶

The translation of the riddle in our manuscript is the following: “I bite you, I tremble at you: what am I? A circle of three syllables indicates me. If you take away the first letter, you might see that I am a pause from toils and the end of life; if you rub out my second letter as well, you will show that I am the highest bulwark during storms; if you take away the third letter as well, I am a flower that makes people happy; but if you take away the fourth as well, you might see that I am something eternal, bound to last forever.”

Thanks to many similar riddles, it is not difficult to find the multiple solutions to this one: the first word is the honeycomb (κηρίον); the second is the tomb (ἡρίον); the third the promontory (ρίον); the fourth the violet (ῖον); the fifth and last is the neuter present participle of

64 The most usual form is the neuter τὸ νῶτον / τὰ νῶτα, but in some post-classical works (in the Bible, for instance—a quite familiar book for a Byzantine monk) we find also the masculine ὁ νῶτος (3 Kingdoms 7:19 LXX).

65 Homer, *Iliad* 15.518–19.

66 For the reasons for my correction (τῶν ἐν ταῖς ζάλαις instead of ἀλαζωνείας), see 225 below.

the verb “to be” (ὄν). The same progression can be found in three riddles that belong to the three most famous “collections” of Byzantine riddles. The version ascribed (falsely) to Michael Psellos presents the following definitions: “I have been begotten by an animal, but I am not an animal,” “I am the repose of human beings,” “I am the sharp end of the land near the seaside,” “I have a strong, good scent,” and “I am the real being.”⁶⁷ The definitions of Basil Megalomytes’ version are different not only as far as their text is concerned, but also because of their number: after “I have been begotten by a bird but my midwife is human,” “I make people cry when I show myself,” “I am beloved by the sailors during storms,” “I bring inside me the spring that gives joy to the soul,” and “I owe my life to a verb,” the author adds a sixth definition (“if you cut also a fifth letter together with the other four, I am made by three strokes”), a hint at the capital letter Ν.⁶⁸ Eustathios Makrembolites’ version is shorter, since it lacks both the first and the last definition: it starts from “I take the dead inside me,” goes to “my name indicates an extremity of land that stretches itself into the mouth of the sea,” and ends with “I am a pretty, sweet-scented flower of the earth.” But the first definition (which is the second in our manuscript’s version) is reinforced by the indication of the sum of the letters that form the word: the total of the five letters of ἥριον is 238 (η 8, ρ 100, ι 10, ο 70, ν 50), a sum that matches with the text of lines 3 and 4 (the number “eleven times twenty plus two times nine”).⁶⁹

67 Psellos 47 Westerink (13 Boissonade = 40 Cougny = 128 Milovanović): Τρισύλλαβον πέφυκα. Σὺ δέ μοι σκόπει / ζῶν με γεννᾷ, ζῶν οὐκ οὖν τυγχάνω. / Ἄν μου τὸ πρῶτον ὑφέλης τῶν γραμμάτων, / εὐρῆς με κατὰ παυσιν ἀνθρώπων γένους / τὸ δεύτερον δὲ γράμμα συναφανίσας / γῆς πρὸς θάλατταν ὀξὺ κατῖδοις τέλος / κἂν τὸ τρίτον δὲ γράμμα πάλιν ὑφέλης, / εὐωδῖαν ἔχον με πολλὴν κατῖδος / εἰ γράμμα μου πάλιν τέταρτον ἐκβάλοις, / ὄντως ὃν εὐρήσεις με, κἂν δίχα τόνου.

68 Basil Megalomytes 6 Boissonade: Πτηνὸν με γεννᾷ, καὶ βροτὸν μαῖαν φέρω, / οὐ πρέσβις οὐράνιος ἄπιλος πέλω. / Ἄν δ’ ἀποτάμῃς τὴν κατ’ ἀρχάς μου κάραν, / δάκρυα κινῶ καὶ μόνῃς ἐκ τῆς θέας / εἰ δ’ ἀφέλῃς μου καὶ κάραν τὴν δευτέραν, / ποθητόν εἰμι ναυτίλοις ἐν ταῖς ζάλαις / εἰ δ’ αὐ κεφαλὴν ἀφέλῃς μου καὶ τρίτην, / ἔαρ τὸ τερψιθυμον εἰς μέσον φέρω. / Εἰ δ’ ἀποκόψῃς καὶ τετάρτην μου κάραν, / ὑπαρξὶν ἐκ ῥήματος καὶ μόνῃν ἔχω / εἰ δ’ αὖ σὺν αὐταῖς καὶ πέμπτῃν διατέμῃς, / γραμμαὶ συνιστῶσί με τρεῖς, Σοφέ, νόει.

69 Eustathios Makrembolites 4.3 Treu: Ἐγὼ βροτοὺς θνήσκοντας ἐντὸς λαμβάνω, / πεντὰς συνιστᾷ καὶ μόνῃ με γραμμάτων, / εἰς ἑνδεκα φθάνουσα γοργῶς εἰκάδας, / διπλοδρομούσης εἰς ἐκείνην ἐννάδος. / Πόρρω βαλεῖν μου γράμμα τὸ πρῶτον θέλων / εὐρῆς ἔχον με κλῆσιν ἀκρωτηρίου / γῆς προτρέχοντος εἰς θαλάττιον στόμα. / Ἐπειτα μακρὰν καὶ τὸ δεύτερον φέρων / ἡδύπνοον γῆς ἀνθος ὡραῖον μάθης. / Ἄκουε καὶ

But, since we have already seen that frequent variation is a peculiar element of Byzantine riddles, we should not be surprised to find other (anonymous) versions of this same riddle that share some details either with one or another version. If we look at the text handed down by the eighteenth-century manuscript preserved in the library of another monastery of Mount Athos, we notice that the text is very close to the one we find in Psellos’s “collection”;⁷⁰ the main difference is at line 6, where the words ποθεινόν εἰμι ναυτίλοις ἐν ταῖς ζάλαις not only correspond to Megalomytes’ text (ποθητόν εἰμι ναυτίλοις ἐν ταῖς ζάλαις), but are also similar to the text of our riddle (τήρημα δείξης ἄκρον τῶν ἐν ταῖς ζάλαις)—a coincidence that corroborates my correction of the surely corrupted ἀλαζωνείας. The already quoted Athous Dionysii 347 preserves the longest version of the riddle: not only does it have six definitions (as with Basil Megalomytes), but it also plays on the number of the letters (as with Eustathios Makrembolites); the definitions are again quite different, much longer in the first case (“I have been built by a small animal full of a bigger wisdom, useful for small and bigger tasks, all necessary, by collecting many-colored flowers”), a bit longer in the second (“I fill the eyes with tears by showing the house common to all mankind”), and of equal length in the other cases (“a promontory of the Peloponnese,” “a flower that bestows a lot of joy,” and “something that really exists”).⁷¹

δίδασκε τὴν κλῆσιν μόνῃν. A few Byzantine riddles give the reader a clue based on the number-values of the letters that form the solution (see nos. 4, 30, 35, and 43 in Basil Megalomytes’ “collection”); Page, *Further*, 504 n. 2, mentions “a curious example in a Bithynian epitaph of the second century A.D.,” where “the deceased invites the reader to guess his name, giving clues including the sum of the nine letters” (Peek 132.4); see also the enigmatic self-presentation of Philippos Monotropos, the author of the *Dioptra* (discussed by K. Bentein and K. Demoen, “The Reader in Eleventh-Century Book Epigrams,” in *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*, ed. F. Bernard and K. Demoen [Farnham and Burlington, 2012], 82–84). On the use of isopsephy in Greek literature, see C. Luz, *Technopaignia: Formspiele in der griechischen Dichtung* (Leiden, 2010), 247–326.

70 Cf. Sophronios, “Νέα βιβλία,” 159 n. 38: Τρισύλλαβον πέφυκα σὺ δέ μοι σκόπει / ζῶν με γεννᾷ ζῶν οὐκ οὖν τυγχάνω / ἄν μου τὸ πρῶτον ἀφέλῃς τῶν γραμμάτων / εὐρεῖ με κατὰ παυσιν ἀνθρώπων γένους / τὸ δεύτερον δὲ πάλιν συναφανίσας / ποθεινόν εἰμι ναυτίλοις ἐν ταῖς ζάλαις / εἰ καὶ τοῦ τρίτου γράμματός μου ἐκβάλλῃς / εὐωδίας ἔχειν με πολλῆς κατῖδος / εἰ γράμμα μου ἀποσηκώσης / οὕτως ὃν εὐρήσεις με, κἂν δίχα τόνου. The MS is Lavra H 95.

71 Cf. Lambros, “Βυζαντιακὰ αἰνίγματα,” 163 n. 20: Ζῶν μικρὸν σοφίας μεῖζονος γέμον / ἐξ ἀνθέων ποικίλων συνέλεξέ με, / χρήσιμον

The **twelfth** riddle plays on some words we already know—although the first word is different from those we have seen before:

Ζῶον πτερωτόν εἰμι καὶ βλάπτω λίαν
 ὅταν ἐπιστῶ καὶ νέφος . . .
 ψήφῳ δέ μοι πέφυκε τριάς δεκάκις
 ἑκατοντάδι τῇ τριπλῇ συνημμένη
 καὶ τῇ μονάδι παγκάλως ἡρμοσμένη
 δισυλλάβῳ δὲ πεντάδι τῶν γραμμάτων.
 τὸ πρῶτον γάρ μου γράμμα τοίνυν εἰ ξέσης,
 ζῶον με θαλάττιον ἴδης ἐν τάχει·
 ξέσας δὲ πάλιν δυάδα τῶν γραμμάτων,
 αἰσθήσεων εὕρης με τῶν πέντε μίαν.
 Εἰ δ' ἐκβαλεῖς μου καὶ τὸ τρίτον ὡς θέμις,
 εὕρης με φίλτατον καὶ κραταῖον. . .⁷²

F. 263v, col. 1, lines 21–26; col. 2, lines 1–6

The tentative translation of this riddle (whose text is not easy to read) is something like this: “I am a winged animal and I am very noxious; I loom up in swarms . . . ; as for my number, I am ten times a triad, connected with a triple hundred and brought to its perfect completion through a single unit—a completion that is a bisyllabic set of five letters. If you erase my first letter, you might soon discover that I am a sea animal; after having erased a couple of letters, you might find out that I am one of the five senses; if, as it is right to do,

χρείαις μικραῖς τε καὶ μεγάροις, / ναὶ μὴν ἀναγκαίαις τε ὑπάρχειν μάλα.
 / Ἐπωνυμία μου δὲ τοῦ τρίτου γένους. / Διπλῇ συνιστᾷ τήνδε τριάς
 γραμμάτων. / ἀριθμὸς δ' ἐστὶ τῶν τοιούτων γραμμάτων / τὰ πέντε
 δεκάκις, τρισσῶς δὲ τὰ τρία / πρὸς τοῖς γε πεντήκοντα τετράκις ὁμῶς.
 / Ἀφαιρέσει δὲ τοῦ πρώτου τῶν γραμμάτων / πληρῶ δακρύων τὰς ὀψεις
 ἐκ τῆς θέας, / τὸ κοινὸν κατάλυμα πᾶσι δεικνύον. / Τοῦ δευτέρου δ' αὖ
 τοῦτο δὴ πεπονθότος, / Πελοποννήσου γῆς ἄκρα γε τυγχάνω. / Ἡ τοῦ
 τρίτου δ' ἀφαίρεσις πάλιν, ξένη, / τέρψιν πολλὴν χορηγοῦν τεκταίνει μ'
 ἄνθος. / Καὶ θάτερον τῶν γραμμάτων ἂν ἀνέλγης / ὄντως δὲ εὐρήσεις
 με· αὐτὸς δ' οὐκ σκόπει. The solution written in this manuscript is
 μέλισσα, clearly a mistake (because it does not allow for the progressive
 subtractions), but understandable (because the definition of this
 and of most other versions—including the version of M—matches
 more with the bee than with the honeycomb). However, the calculation
 is not perfect, because the number indicated in lines 7–9 is 259
 (“ten times five, three times three, and four times fifty”), but the sum
 of the letters is 258 (κ 20, η 8, ρ 100, ι 10, ο 70, ν 50).

72 The ink of the second part of line 2 has been washed out; the beginning of the last word of line 12 has been covered by a black spot.

you throw away my third letter as well, you might find that I am a dear and strong. . . .”

This time the copyist has written the solution—in red, in the left margin: it is the word ἀκρίς (“grasshopper”), a solution that matches both the definition we are able to read (a swarm of grasshoppers does cause severe damage to the crops) and the number: the sum of the single letters is 331 (α 1, κ 20, ρ 100, ι 10, σ 200), which is the same number indicated by the calculation of lines 3–5 (“three times ten plus one hundred plus one”). We have already met the third and the fourth solutions: they are ρίς and ἴς, the same solutions of the “shrimp” riddle, the first of our series; the “nose” is even expressed with the same words (τῶν πέντε αἰσθήσεων εὕρης με μίαν and αἰσθήσεων εὕρης με τῶν πέντε μίαν), while we can barely guess the solution “strength.” thanks to the adjective κραταῖον.

There is only one puzzling detail that is likely not right: ρίς is what we get if we erase a couple (δυάς) of letters of ἀκρίς; but if we wipe out its first letter, we get κρίς, a non-existent word. The sea animal hinted at might be the familiar καρίς, but if this is right then the text of the riddle is not correct: the copyist has used one of the common formulas to indicate the cancellation of one letter (εἰ ξέσης, εἰ ἐκβαλεῖς, ἂν ἐξέλγης, ἂν τέμνεις, etc.), without thinking that, in this case, the riddle asked for the exchange of the first two letters (ἀκρίς > καρίς) and, subsequently, for the elimination of the first couple (ακ / κα); the correct form of the line should be something like τὰ πρῶτα γράμματα τοίνυν ἂν ἀλλάξεις.⁷³



Although it displays the usual aenigmatic construction, the **thirteenth** riddle asks for changes we have not so far seen, the cancellation of the second letter instead of the first one and the aspiration of the first letter:

73 The exchange of position of two letters is a wordplay that is never attested in Byzantine riddles. The elimination of the first two letters can be seen in two riddles: the first one is a poem (30 Cougny = 115 Milovanović) attributed either to Manuel Philes (cf. E. Miller, *Manuelis Philae Carmina* [Paris, 1855–57], 2:418, n. 54) or to Euthymios Tornikes (cf. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Noctes*, 204 n. 8.1), where the two solutions are ἀλέκτωρ and Ἐκτωρ; the second one is a riddle (Aulikalamos 4 Boissonade = 87 Milovanović) with three solutions (πνοῦς, οὔς, ὕς).

Καθυγρός εἰμι καὶ γράμματι καὶ λόγῳ·
 μιᾷ συλλαβῇ γραμμάτων τε πεντάδι
 μετρούμενός τε καὶ ποσούμενος, φίλε.
 Τὸ δεύτερον δὲ γράμμα μου ξέσας μόνον,
 τρέχειν με δείξεις εὐτονωτάτως λίαν,
 μένειν κάτω δὲ δασύνας ἀπεργάσῃ.

F. 263v, col. 2, lines 7–12

5 δόξεις M

The translation is as follows: “I am very wet, because of the letters that make up my name and of their meaning; once I am measured and weighed, my dear friend, I turn out to be formed by one syllable with a set of five letters. If you erase the second letter only, you will show that I run very vigorously, but if you aspirate me you will make me stay below.”

Mioni guessed the correct solution of the riddle (which is not written on the manuscript): the “wet thing” is πλοῦς, the act of sailing, a monosyllabic word of five letters; the grammatical wetness implied by the definition might allude to the liquid syllable πλ.⁷⁴ The other solutions (not mentioned by Mioni, who, like the copyist, wrote only the first solution in his catalogue) are ποῦς (“foot”) and φλοῦς (“rush”): the foot is the part of the body that runs with much vigor; rush grows in the bottom of muddy rivers, or lakes, or ponds.⁷⁵

The cancellation of the second letter instead of the first does not appear very frequently in Byzantine riddles, but it had been used for the first time (as far as I know) by another famous Byzantine poet. In the epigram Εἰς φθόνον, George of Pisidia writes:

Τὸ δευτερεῦον τοῦ φθόνου γράμμα ξέσας
 εὔροις ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν φθόνον τεθηγμένον·
 φόνος γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ φθόνος τῶν βασκάνων.⁷⁶

74 Cf., for instance, Dionysius Thrax 632.9.

75 The word φλοῦς is the Ionic form of the more common Attic φλέως (Herodotus, *Histories* 3.98.4).

76 George of Pisidia, *Epig.* 28 Sternbach (= 111 Tartaglia): “If you erase the second letter of the word ‘envy,’ you might find in it the sharp point of the word ‘murder’: in fact, envy can murder people.” The first two lines are also quoted by the Suda under the entry φθόνος (with the reading γεγραμμένον instead of τεθηγμένον); they are not attributed to any poet, but just preceded by the indication ἱαμβοί.

This poem is not a riddle proper, because the two solutions (φθόνος and φόνος) are in the text of the poem itself. But both its vocabulary (the peculiar use of the verb ξέω, which is very common in Byzantine enigmatic language) and its structure show that similar jokes were familiar to Byzantine intellectuals almost a couple of centuries before Constantine Kephalas decided to gather his remarkable collection of Greek epigrams.⁷⁷

Though rare, the change of a word through the aspiration of a consonant is also attested in Byzantine enigmatic poetry: here, through the action of δασύτης, we have the voiceless bilabial stop π that turns into the aspirated φ; in a riddle of Euthymios Tornikes, we find the opposite change, where, through a process of ψιλότης, φόνος becomes πόνος.⁷⁸

Introduced by the clausula *extra metrum* ἄν δὲ, the **fourteenth** riddle partially reproduces the same sequence we saw in the epigram of the *Greek Anthology* quoted at the beginning of this essay:

Θύων με δείξεις εἰκόνα θεῖον τύπον.
 Εἰ δ’ ἐκτάμης μου τὴν κεφαλὴν εὐθέως,
 ὄργανον αἰσθήσεως εὐρήσεις φίλον.
 Εἰ δ’ ἐκβάλης μου καὶ τὸ δεύτερον, φίλε,
 τρέφω, καθιδύνω σε τετράπουρον πέλον·
 κόψας δὲ καὶ τὸ τρίτον, στοιχεῖον ἴδης.

F. 263v, col. 2, lines 14–19

4 φίλος M

77 The same joke is attested in one of the gnomic epigrams composed by the nun Kassia in the ninth century (A 40–42 Krumbacher: Ἐξελε πᾶς τις τοῦ φθόνου τὸ στοιχεῖον· / [τὸν] θανάτον φημι καὶ φέρει τοῦτον φθόνος· / πολλοῖς γὰρ συμβέβηκεν ἐκ φθόνου φόνος).

78 Euthymios Tornikes 8.4 (cf. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Noctes*, 206). The solutions of the riddle are three (φθόνος, φόνος, πόνος); the couple φθόνος / φόνος very probably comes from George of Pisidia. The riddle is not present in Milovanović’s collection because she preferred to print the text of Basilios Megalomytes 1 Boissonade (95 Milovanović: Φυτοσπόρος τις τῶν κακῶν τῶν ἐν βίῳ / ἐγὼ τὰ πάντα συλλαβὴν περιφέρω· / Ζητεῖς δὲ μαθεῖν καὶ τίνα κλῆσιν φέρω; / Μήτηρ ἐμὴ μὲν συλλαβῶν δυὰς μία· / διπλὴ δὲ φωτίζει με τριάς γραμμάτων· / Καὶ πρῶτον ἐν μου, δεύτερον, γράμμα ξέσας, / πανευφυῶς εὐρης με χεῖρα θανάτου· / καὶ δεύτερον δὲ καὶ τὸ πρῶτόν μου πάλιν, / ζῶον βροτοῖς χρησίμον εὐρης τετράπουρον). The first two solutions of the riddle happen to be the same Pisidian pair (φθόνος/φόνος), but the third one (πόνος) is different from those we find in the other examples.

The translation runs as follows: “If you celebrate a sacrifice, you will show that my figure is a divine image. But as soon as you cut my head, you will discover that I am an organ of sense. If you throw away the second letter as well, my dear friend, I feed you and I season you, a four-footed creature; after you have cut the third letter too, you might see a letter.”

Mioni’s intelligence compensated for the absence of the solution in the margin of the column: the first word cannot be anything else than βοῦς (“ox”)—a typical sacrificial victim, but also a god, at least for the Egyptians. This solution, together with the second and the fourth (οὖς “ear” and ζ “sigma”), compels us to presume that the third one is ὕς (“pig”), even though the text of line 5 is a bit awkward.⁷⁹

The **fifteenth** is another witty riddle:

Ἔμοι πόδες κίνησις αὐδὴ καὶ τρίχες,
γράμματα τρία, συλλαβὴ δέ μοι μία.
Ἄν μου τὸ πρῶτον ἐξέλῃς τῶν γραμμάτων,
ἀφείλες αὐδὴν, τὴν τρίχα καὶ τοὺς πόδας,
εἴασας δὲ κίνησιν τὴν μόγις μόνην.

F. 263v, col. 2, lines 20–24
ζ εἴασας Μ

Its translation runs as follows: “I have feet, I move, I have a voice, and hair, three letters, and one syllable. If you remove my first letter, you take away my voice, my hair, and feet, and leave me movement alone, just barely.”

79 A different riddle with the same four solutions was published by Lambros among the riddles present in Athous Dionysii 347 (83 Milovanović: Τῶν γηπόνων ζῶων εἰμὶ κερασφόρον / βροτοῖς τ’ ἀρήγω ἐν χρεῖαις τλησιπόνους. / Τετράς δὲ γραμμάτων ἐν μιᾷ τῇ λέξει / ποιεῖ τὸν τῆς ἐπωνυμίας μου λόγον. / Πληροῖ δ’ ἀριθμὸν τὰ στοιχεῖά μου τόνδε, / τὰ δώδεχ’ ἐξάκις ἑκατόν θ’ ἐξάκις. / Τὸ πρῶτον δ’ ἐκβαλὼν τῶν στοιχείων, ξένε, / αὐτίκα εἴπας ἐν τῶν αἰσθητηρίων. / Τὸ δευτέρον τ’ αὐτὸ ἐκβαλὼν τῶν γραμμάτων, / εὐρές με βρωτὸν ζῶον τετράπουον πάλιν. / Τὸ τρίτον δ’ αὐτὸ ἐκβάλῃς τῶν γραμμάτων, / ἔμεινα ἐν τῶν στοιχείων τῶν τοῦ λόγου); another shorter version of this riddle can be found in Vind. Theol. Gr. 95 (end of the fifteenth century), f. 59v; see H. Hunger and O. Kresten, *Katalog der griechischen Handschriften der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, vol. 3.1, *Codices Theologici 1–100* (Vienna, 1976), 172, but also K. von Holzinger, *Die Aristophaneshandschriften der Wiener Hofbibliothek*, vol. 1, *Die Busbeckeschen Aristophaneshandschriften* (Vienna, 1911), 107–9.

Quite oddly, Mioni writes that the solution of the riddle inserted by the copyist in the usual place (the right margin of the page, between the last line of riddle 14 and the first line of riddle 15) is κῶψ (a small kind of owl). His suggestion is strange, but not because of its meaning—in fact, κῶψ (a less attested variant of the more common σκῶψ) satisfies the clues given in the first line (it has feet, it moves, it has a voice and hair), as almost any other animal would. Mioni’s reading is weird because the word written by the monk is clearly θῶψ (“flatterer”). This seems, in fact, to me the right solution of the riddle: a flatterer can move himself (since he has got feet), is able to speak (indeed, speaking is the action that primarily defines his behavior), and, provided that he is not bald, his head is covered with hair. And, if we take away the first letter, the word becomes ὦψ (“eye”)—a part of the body that, dumb and glabrous, can move itself even though it has no feet.

If this solution is right (the agreement of the copyist is welcome, but, as we shall see with the next riddle, it is not decisive evidence), we can take advantage of the smart construction of this riddle to solve the ninth riddle, which we earlier put aside. That riddle had two solutions as well: the first one (two letters) was something endowed with a thin and translucent body (λεπτὸν νόησον καὶ διαυγὴ τὴν φύσιν, / μόνα δύο γράμματα προσκεκτημένον); the second one (three letters) was something or someone dangerous from whom it was better to escape (εἰ προστεθῇ δὲ καὶ τρίτον τοῦτοις, τότε / τρώμω σε τάχει φεῦγε μὴ καταλάβω). The solution read by Mioni in the margin was the hardly plausible θώραξ; the three red letters seem to be a θ, a ω, and a third small sign that looks like a cross. What if the third stroke were a poorly written ψ?

We would then have a riddle with the same solutions as the fifteenth riddle—but with different definitions, set in a different order: an eye (ὦψ) has a form (φύσις) that might be defined as λεπτή (in the trivial sense of “small”) and διαυγής (in the sense of “shining” and “bright”); a flatterer (θῶψ) is a man one should try to shun as much as possible. This last clue fits very well the typical portrait of a flatterer, but is less suitable for the less dangerous owl.⁸⁰

80 A riddle with the same solution (“a flatterer”) is, according to Wolfgang Schultz (*Rätsel aus dem hellenischen Kulturkreis* [Leipzig, 1909], 1:40–41), the comic fragment (adespota 711 Kassel-Austin): γαστήρ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα, πανταχὴ βλέπων / ὀφθαλμός, ἔρπον τοῖς ὁδοῦσι

The **sixteenth** riddle is a well-known one:

Τ<ρ>αφείς ὄρεσι καὶ φάραγγιν ἀγρίαις,
κῆρυξ πέφυκα τῶν λόγων ὕμνωδίας·
φωνήν μὲν οὐκ ἔναρθρον εὐηχῇ δ' ἔχω.

F. 263v, col. 2, lines 25–26; f. 264r, col. 1, line 1

1 φάρυγγιν M

Its translation does not present any difficulties: “Born in the mountains and in the wild ravines, I am the herald of the words that sing a hymn: my voice is not articulated, but it is harmonious.”

With two slight variants (τραφείς instead of τραφέν, and εὐηχῇ instead of εὐηχον), it is the same riddle we read in the “collection” of Basil Megalomytes, whose solution is the word *σημαντήριον*, indicating a table of wood (from a tree that was “born in the mountains and in the wild ravines”) used as a bell for calling the monks to prayer.⁸¹ The same solution can be also found in a prose version of this riddle, which is a part of the collection of “Question-and-answer literature” (Ἐρωταποκρίσεις). The question is “What is the object that did not talk when it lived, that talked when it was dead and whose sound made the people

who were hearing it magnify God?” The answer is “the wooden bell.”⁸²

So, it is quite a surprise to read in the margin of our manuscript another solution—and a really strange one: κόραξ (“raven”). If such a bird can be born “in the mountains and in the wild ravines,” it is quite difficult to think that the croak of a raven could announce the notes of a hymn—and there is no way that such a croaking cry could be defined as “harmonious.” Since this solution is so clearly absurd, I do not think it had been guessed by the copyist; more probably, he took it from another riddle and wrongly wrote it here (although I am not able to tell which one: in this series, there is no riddle that could admit such a solution, nor do I know any Byzantine riddle whose solution is “raven”).⁸³

Unless we see in this surprising solution the nickname of the monk who, in the monastery where the copyist lived and worked, was in charge of calling his brethren to the holy services (a human substitute of the wooden bell). The epithet “raven” might allude both to the humble origins of this monk (“born in the mountains,” etc.) and, more probably, to the dark color of his frock: not only was μελαγχίτων (“with a black frock”) a common designation for a monk in Byzantium, but we also know of a Rhodian scribe named Symeon-Sabas who was called ὁ Κόραξ.⁸⁴

θηρίον (“His body is all belly; eyes that look all ways; a beast that travels in its teeth”); Schultz is the scholar to whom we owe one of the most complete overviews of the genre “riddle” in antiquity (and also beyond), the *RE* entry “Rätsel” (vol. I.A.1, cols. 62–125). Konrad Ohlert (*Rätsel und Rätselspiele der alten Griechen*, 2nd rev. ed. [Berlin, 1912], 168–69) thinks that the solution of this popular riddle is a crab. Plutarch, who quotes the fragment (*How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* 54b), says it describes a parasite instead. I wonder whether the two solutions printed by Mioni for the ninth and fourteenth riddles (the weird θώραξ and κώψ) are simple typographical errors.

81 Basil Megalomytes 27 Boissonade (65 Cougny = 24 Milovanović). In his commentary, Boissonade writes the following: “Σημαντήριον, id est σημαντήριον, Graecis vocatur, σημαντρον etiam, lignea tabula qua pro campanis utuntur. Ob materiam σημαντήριον dictum fuit a poeta natum esse in montibus.” For the object, see the entry *Semantron* (σήμαντρον), *ODB* 3:1868. The riddle is quoted in many other MSS: Great Lavra H 95 (cf. Sophronios, “Νέα βιβλία,” 155 n. 9) has a shorter version (Κῆρυξ πέφυκα τῆς λόγου ὕμνωδίας / φωνήν μὲν οὐκ ἔναρθρον εὐηχον δ' ἔχω); the version edited by Kytion, “Βυζαντινὰ αἰνίγματα,” 137 n. 27, is very similar to Megalomytes’ (Τραφείς ὄρεσι καὶ φάραγγιν ἀγρίοις, / κῆρυξ πέφυκα τοῖς λόγων ὕμνωδίας / φωνήν μὲν οὐκ ἔναρθρον εὐηχον δ' ἔχω), although the editor gives some trivial solutions (φόρμιγγς or αὐλός).

82 G. F. Georg Heinrici, *Griechisch-byzantinische Gesprächsbücher*, Abhandlungen der philologischen-historischen Klasse der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 28:8 (1911), no. 110: τίς ζῶν οὐκ ἐλάλει καὶ ἀποθανὼν ἐλάλει καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τὸν θεὸν ἐδόξαζον; τὸ σήμανδρον.

83 In the collection of Aldhelm of Malmesbury, we find a Latin riddle whose solution is *corbus* (63), but its text is completely different, since the description of the bird is based on the story of Genesis 8:6–7 (Noah’s raven). However, the structure of the riddle is similar to that of some Byzantine αἰνίγματα, because the second solution (*orbus*) comes from the elimination of the initial letter of the first word (l. 10: *Littera tollatur: post haec sine prole manebo*).

84 He was the scribe who, in 1232, after having copied Vat. Gr. 648, wrote the following subscription: Ἐγράφη ἡ παρούσα ἱερὰ βιβλος . . . χειρὶ τοῦ ταπεινοῦ Συμεὼν ἢ Σάβα· . . . οὐ τὸ ἐπὶ κλην τοῦ Κόρακο(ς) (see A. Turyn, *Codices Graeci Vaticani saeculis 13. et 14. scripti annorumque notis instructi* [Vatican City, 1964], 26–27). Similar ornithological jokes were quite popular in Western Europe as well: Theodulf of Orléans describes a metaphorical battle between white and black birds (*De pugna avium*); on this poem (and on the figure of the *Praeceptor Germaniae* Rabanus Maurus, whose name meant “raven”), see D. Schaller, “Der junge ‘Rabe’ am Hof Karls des Grossen (Theodulf carm. 27),” in *Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. B. Bischoff, J. Autenrieth, and F. Brunhölzl

In Par. Gr. 1630, one of the two French manuscripts that preserve the “collection” of Basil Megalomytes, we find the same sequence as in our manuscript, the sixteenth riddle of Marc. Gr. 512 (τὸ σήμανδρον) being followed by the **seventeenth** one:

Δούλος κελεύω ἐν τάχει τῷ δεσπότῃ,
σοφῶς τὰ μέτρα δημοποιῶν εὐφρόνης,
ἀναστὰς ὕπνου ἔργον εἰς χειρας φέρειν.

F. 264r, col. 1, lines 2–4

3 φέρειν M: φέρε Basilus 28 Boissonade

The very complex sentence that forms the riddle as it is witnessed in our manuscript can be rendered in this way: “Even if I am a slave, I show my knowledge of the parts of the night by quickly ordering my master to wake up from his sleep and bring his daily work to his hands.”⁸⁵

Both Boissonade and Mioni correctly solve the riddle: the solution (which does not appear in the margin of our manuscript) is ἀλέκτωρ, the cock, the “*gallus gallinaceus*” mentioned by Boissonade in his Latin commentary. It is worth noting that the cock was a favourite subject in ancient riddles: in the “collection” of Megalomytes there is another riddle with the same solution; Athous Dionysii 347 preserves two prose versions that have nothing in common (apart from their solution) with the two Byzantine poetic riddles; again, the English poet Aldhelm dedicates a Latin riddle to a loquacious (*garrulus*) cock that in the dark night celebrates with its voice the golden rays and the noble light of the god Phoebus.⁸⁶

(Stuttgart, 1971), 123–41; and T. M. Andersson, *Theodulf of Orléans: The Verse* (Tempe, 2014), 174–76.

⁸⁵ The reading we find in the third line of the version present in Megalomytes’ “collection” (28 Boissonade = 66 Cougny = 45 Milovanović) seems better than the one we find in our MS (because here we should expect the accusative ἀναστάντα instead of the nominative ἀναστάς). In that version, the last line is the order given by the slave to his master (“Wake up from your sleep and bring your daily work to your hands!”).

⁸⁶ Basil Megalomytes 23 Boissonade = 46 Milovanović; the prose riddles were first edited by Lambros, “Βυζαντιακὰ αἰνίγματα,” 215 n. 26 (47 Milovanović), and 216 n. 13; Aldhelm 26. See also 115 Milovanović (partially quoted on 226 above).

The text of the **eighteenth** riddle is more problematic, because in a few places the words have been made less readable by several ink stains.

Ἐμὲ κρατοῦντα βέλος ἡκονημένον
πλήττω, σπαράσσω, συντριβῶ δὴ τῷ τάχει.
Νίκην γὰρ οἶδα μὴ δίδειν τῷ χρωμένῳ,
ρίπτοντι δ’ εἰς γῆν· ὥς κανοῦν τεθρυμμένον,
στέφω χαρίτων ἐκ θεοῦ συνεργίας.

F. 264r, col. 1, lines 5–9

4 ὥς κανοῦν *ut vid.* | τεθριμμένον M

Consequently, the translation of the riddle is also quite tentative: “As a sharp arrow, I swiftly do hit, tear, and destroy the man who seizes me. I know how to bestow a victory not to the people who use me, but to those who throw me to the ground; as if I were a broken basket, I honor through a crown the person who contributes to procure the favor of God.”

As for the solution, a useful hint comes from the copyist who, in contrast with what he has habitually done so far, does not limit himself to writing down a single word, but adds a much longer solution: ἄκανθα ἐξῆς φύεται τὸ τριαντάφυλλον (something like “from the rose thorns grow continually”). In fact, the thorns of a rose do wound the hand of the person who tries to pick the flower (this is clearly the explanation of the first two lines of the riddle); more obscure is the sense implied in the next two lines (is it better to throw the flower down instead of using it?); not much clearer is the last line (an allusion to the crown of thorns of Jesus Christ?). Further, this wordy solution (better, this personal remark) seems to imply that sometimes the answers to the riddles were (at least in this manuscript) added by the copyist on the basis of his own intuition. If the original he was copying had the solutions of the riddles, why did he refrain from writing them all down? If the original did not have them, then he might have added those he already knew—or those he thought he had found (such as this one).

What I have said about the cock (the popularity of that bird as the subject of riddles) is true for the rose as well. Among the many Latin poems dedicated to this flower, there is also a riddle whose solution is the rose: in Symphosius 45 we read a verse that recalls the beginning of our Greek riddle, because the flower states that,

in order not to be violated, it defends itself through the help of its sharp arrows (*saeptaque, ne violer, telis defendor acutis*).⁸⁷

The **nineteenth** riddle is short and (seemingly) simple:

Ζωῆς χρόνοις μου τέκνον οὐδ' ὄλως φέρω.
Εἰ δὴ τάφος με συγκαλύψει καὶ γαῖα,
πυρὸς παρευθὺς καὶ τροφεὺς πέλω μέγας.

F. 264r, col. 1, lines 10–12

3 πῆρον π. κ. Μ

A word-for-word translation might be as follows: “During the time of my life, I do not absolutely beget any child. But if the soil covers me like a tomb, I soon become a big nourisher of fire.” This literal rendering makes the riddle much more difficult than it really is, though: how can such a translation match the solution that is written in the manuscript? At the end of the former riddle, in the usual space between the two columns, the copyist has written in red the word σῖτος (“grain”). But how can a grain nourish a fire?

The key to the riddle lies in the first word of line 3: if the correction πυρὸς is right (a necessary correction, because the πῆρον of the manuscript does not make any sense), its intentional ambiguity proves to be the instrument used by the unknown poet to baffle the readers, because the word is not the genitive of πῦρ (“fire”), but the nominative of πυρός (“wheat”). The correct translation of the last line is then “since I am wheat, I soon become a big nourisher”: the wheat grain is barren and childless during its lifetime, but gives life to a stalk of

wheat after it has been sowed in a field and covered by rich soil (cf. John 12:24).

A very similar wordplay can be found in an epigram composed by the emperor Julian (a poet who does not seem to have despised this genre, if he really wrote the riddles some MSS attribute to him). In a funny poem that celebrates the superiority of wine over beer, Julian mocks the god who presented beer to mankind, calling him “Demetrios” (instead of Dionysos), “Bromos” (instead of Bromios), and πυρογενῆ;⁸⁸ the first name clearly alludes to Demeter, the goddess who presided over cereals (used by the Celts to produce beer) and the sober counterpart of Dionysos; the second word means “oats” and opposes one of the most famous epithets of the god of wine (“the Roarer”); the third is intentionally ambiguous, because πυρογενής means not only “born from fire” (like Dionysos, who was drawn from the womb of his mother Semele, who was herself struck by fire after having seen Zeus in all his shining glory), but also “born from wheat” (like beer).⁸⁹

The **twentieth** poem is the most puzzling of the whole series, but not for the reason one might suppose. It is the most puzzling because it is not a riddle:

Φιλῶν μὲν πολλὰ εἰς μάτην βάλλεις κόπους·
ὄρους κρατῶν δὲ τακτικῆς μου φιλιάδος
τὴν ἀντάμειψιν τοῦ τρόπου ῥῶσιν λάβοι,
ὄλβον πολὺν τε τῆς ἄνω κληρουχίας.

F. 264r, col. 1, lines 13–16

The translation proves such an assertion: “Your deep love is a useless toil: the person who respects the bounds of my regulated friendship might get as the exchange of my behavior strength, the great happiness of the heavenly inheritance.” This is not a riddle—and, in fact, the

87 Symphosius’s riddle plays on the similarity between the rose and the virgin. On the interpretation of this riddle, see M. Bergamin, *Aenigmata Symposii: La fondazione dell’enigmistica come genere poetico* (Florence, 2005), 138–43; *Symphosius: Aenigmata*, ed. T. J. Leary (London, 2014), 143–45. On the late poems dedicated to the rose, see C. Joret, *La rose dans l’antiquité et au moyen âge: histoire, légendes et symbolisme* (Paris, 1892); C. Poma, *Elogio della rosa: Da Archiloco ai poeti d’oggi* (Turin, 2002); and M. Mello, *Rosae: Il fiore di Venere nella vita e nella cultura romana. Biferi rosaria Paesti* (Naples, 2003). As I have already noted, Milovanović-Barhan’s essay “Aldhelm’s Enigmata” (n. 44 above) makes interesting remarks on the relationship between Greek and Latin riddles; other useful considerations can be found in Z. Pavloskis, “The Riddler’s Microcosm: From Symphosius to St. Boniface,” *CLMed* 39 (1988): 219–51.

88 *Greek Anthology* 9.368: Τίς, πόθεν εἷς, Διόνυσε; μὰ γὰρ τὸν ἀληθέα Βάκχον, / οὐ σ’ ἐπιγινώσκω, τὸν Διὸς οἶδα μόνον· / κείνος νέκταρ ὄδωδε, σὺ δὲ τράγου. Ἦ ρά σε Κελτοὶ / τῇ πενίῃ βοτρυῶν τεύξαν ἀπ’ ἀσταχύων· / τῷ σε χρὴ καλέειν Δημήτριον, οὐ Διόνυσον, / πυρογενῆ μᾶλλον καὶ Βρόμιον. On the riddles ascribed to the emperor Julian, see n. 110 below.

89 Both words are very rare: πυρογενής as “born from wheat” is attested only in this epigram; πυρογενής as “born from fire” can be found in an epigram of Ausonius (49.3: an epithet of Dionysus) and—though the reading is not certain—in the Bible (Wi. 17:5).

copyist did not write anything in the margin. What is this poem, then?

We are not completely helpless, though, since these lines are almost identical to the first four lines of a poem that can be read in f. 164 of a manuscript of the thirteenth century, the Vallicellianus Gr. 96.⁹⁰ This poem has an author (the monk Makarios), it is twelve lines long—and it is not a riddle.⁹¹ It is, in fact, a moral meditation, as the following eight lines clearly testify:

Τοίνυν τὸ ρευστὸν τοῦ βίου διδαγμένοι
μόνην ποθῶμεν ἀρετῆς τὴν ἀξίαν·
χρόνος γὰρ αὐτῆς οὐ διαφθείρει κλέος,
μνήμη δὲ μᾶλλον εὐπρεπέστατος πέλει
λαοὺς ἐπευφραίνουσα τοῖς ἐγκωμίοις,
ὥσπερ ἡ πανάρετος σὴ γνώμη, πάτερ.
Εὖχου δὲ τοῦ γράψαντος ταύτην τὴν δέλτον,
Μάκαρος αἰσχροῦ καὶ βεβήλου τοῖς ἔργοις.

Sentences such as “Having learned the fleeting nature of life, I long only for the dignity of virtue” and “Time does not obliterate the reputation of virtue, since its most noble memory makes all the people happy through its praises” have nothing to do with riddles; the character of the “father” of the “virtuous teaching” to whom the poem is dedicated and the figure of the sinner monk who asks for a prayer are real persons, who do not belong at all in an aenigmatic composition.⁹²

Such a poem perfectly fits in the Vallicellianus, a manuscript that contains many ascetic treatises ascribed to figures such as Dorotheus of Gaza, Athanasios of Alexandria, Maximos the Confessor, John Chrysostom, John of Damascus, and Basil of

Caesarea, but I must admit that I do not have a single clue why the beginning of this negligible poem has found its way into a collection of riddles.⁹³

The **twenty-first** poem is again a real riddle, with its own solution. The riddle is known from other sources as well (but in very different versions):

Ἄπληστον εἰμι θηρίον καὶ παμφάγον.
Ἐπὰν δὲ φάγω τὴν βορὰν ἥνπερ λάβω,
θνήσκω παρευθὺς καὶ θανὸν ζῶ καὶ πάλιν
ἐπὶ γῆς οἰκῶ καὶ θεοῦμαι πρὸς πόλιν.
Οὐδεὶς με κρατεῖ καὶ κρατῶν με πᾶς φέρει.

F. 264r, col. 1, lines 17–21
ς πάνυ φέρει M

The translation is the following: “I am an insatiable, all-consuming beast. But, when I have eaten the food that I get, immediately I die and, after having died, I come to life again; I live on the earth and . . . to town. Nobody rules over me and, if he succeeds in ruling over me, everybody brings me.” The solution would be quite easy even if we did not find it clearly written in the customary position: this strange creature is fire (πῦρ), the animal that, after having gobbled down everything, can revive from its seemingly burnt-out embers.

But the structure of the riddle is less simple than it seems, because this version appears not only to contain some elements present in two other riddles with the same solution, but also to be enlarged and strengthened by other aenigmatic statements. Let us start with the other Byzantine riddles on fire. In some recent manuscripts we find this shorter riddle:

Ἄπληστον εἰμι θηρίον καὶ παμφάγον,
ἐπὰν δὲ φάγω τὴν τροφήν ἥν περ λάβω,
θνήσκω παρευθὺς κείμενον ἐπ’ ἐδάφους.⁹⁴

90 The differences are the following: line 1 μὲν M, με V; βάλλεις M, βάλλη V; line 2 φιλιᾶδος M, φίλης V.

91 S. G. Mercati, “Macaire Calorités et Constantin Anagnostès,” *ROC* 22 (1920–21): 162–93 (now in idem, *Collectanea Byzantina* [Bari, 1970], 1:206–35), tentatively attributes the poem to Makarios Kalorites, one of the thirteen orthodox monks killed by the Latins on the island of Cyprus.

92 Mercati’s French translation of the twelve iambic στίχοι Μακαρίου μοναχοῦ is the following: “Celui qui m’aime beaucoup, se fatigue en vain: qui garde les bornes d’une amitié bien ordonnée, aura beaucoup de richesse, un héritage au ciel. Pourtant, nous, qui avons appris la caducité de la vie, nous cherchons seulement la dignité de la vertu dont la gloire est toute belle et réjouit les peuples, comme ta vertueuse doctrine, ô Père. Prie pour celui qui a écrit ce livre, pour Macaire vicieux et profane, impur dans ses œuvres.”

93 On the date and the provenance (Cyprus) of Vall. Gr. 96, and on the poem itself, see the remarks of Mercati, *Collectanea*, 221–22.

94 The text of this riddle (9 Milovanović) comes from the MS 1883 of the Greek National Library, a fairly recent book written in the eighteenth century and edited for the first time by N. A. Veis, “Βυζαντινὰ αἰνίγματα,” *Ἐπετηρὶς τοῦ Φιλολογικοῦ Συλλόγου Παρνασσῶ 6* (1902): 103–10 (at 109, no. 9). Veis published the riddle without adding the solution; Spyridakis, “Βυζαντιὰ αἰνίγματα,” 1904, 191–92 n. 10, did, and, moreover, added an interesting parallel (Herodotus, *Histories* 3.16.3: “The Egyptians believe fire to be a living

The similarities between this and our riddle are manifest: the first line is identical; the second shows a slight difference (τροφήν instead βορὰν); the third starts in the same way (θνήσκω παρευθὺς) and ends in another (κείμενον ἐπ' ἐδάφους: "lying upon the ground").

But what about the second half of the third line of the Venetian version? The expression καὶ θανὸν ζῶ καὶ πάλιν ("after having died, I come to life again") is a perfect aenigmatic statement that can be found in the last line of Cleobulus's riddle, one of the oldest Greek αἰνίγματα:

Εἷς ὁ πατήρ, παῖδες δυοκαίδεκα· τῶν δὲ ἐκάστω
παῖδες <δὶς> τριάκοντα διάνδιχα εἶδος ἔχουσαι·
αἱ μὲν λευκαὶ ἔασιν ἰδεῖν, αἱ δ' αὖτε μέλαιναι·
ἀθάνατοι δέ τ' εἶναι ἀποφθινύθουσιν ἅπασαι.⁹⁵

The life and the death of the thirty daughters (the thirty days and nights that make up each month of the year—the "father" of the riddle) are strongly intertwined, in a never-ending, mutual process of light and darkness—exactly analogous to the course of reciprocal begetting we see in another well-known riddle, the Latin *aenigma* of the ice.⁹⁶

But οὐδεὶς με κρατεῖ καὶ κρατῶν με πᾶς φέρει is also an aenigmatic sentence, because, by stating two (seemingly) contradictory things, it causes the impasse that gets a reader into trouble. No man can rule over fire (using his bare hands), but every man can bring it everywhere (holding a burning torch): it is the same

(seeming) logical contradiction we find in a riddle in the poetry book of Christopher Mitylenaios:

Κρατεῖς με καὶ φεύγω σε κεκρατημένη,
φεύγουσαν ἄθρεῖς καὶ κατασχεῖν οὐ σθένεις.
Κᾶν γοῦν ἀπρίξ σφίγξης με κατέχειν θέλων,
κενὴν λιποῦσα φεύξομαι σὴν παλάμην.⁹⁷

How can anyone who has been conquered escape from his conqueror? Although this thing seems impossible, it really is not: if we overlook the more indefinite (or less definite) terms and try to consider the words that have just one meaning, we find that there is only one word like that: παλάμη ("fist"). What is that which, once caught in a clenched fist, goes away? Snow, of course.

The maker of our riddle has therefore enriched his creation by adding to its traditional form two other clues witnessed by two other riddles that, even if they had different solutions (the year and the snow), each contained a contradictory statement that suited the solution "fire" as well. But he did not limit himself to that: in fact, the other line he added to his text (ἐπὶ γῆς οἰκῶ καὶ θεοῦμαι πρὸς πόλιν) also has an aenigmatic origin, because it comes from a riddle (and a riddle with the same solution, this time).

In the "collection" of Basil Megalomytes, Boissonade printed the following riddle (handed down by Par. Gr. 968 only):

Βαίνω κατὰ γῆς, καὶ πρὸς ὕψος αὐτὸς τρέχω·
χαίρω πρὸς ὕλην, οὐ φιλῶ δὲ τὴν ὕλην·
εἰ γὰρ ἐφίλουν καὶ προσεῖχον ὡς φίλῳ,
ὅμως δι' αὐτῆς καὶ κορύσσομαι πλέον·
καὶ γῆθεν ὑψοῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀνάγω.

The intentional ambiguity of some crucial words makes the riddle quite problematic: "I walk on the earth and also run toward the sky; I am happy for the 'matter' but I do not like 'matter'; if I loved it and touched it as

animal [θηρίον . . . ἐμψυχον] that eats everything it catches [τὰ περ ἂν λάβῃ] and, after having filled itself up with the food [πλησθὲν . . . τῆς βορῆς], dies together with that whereon it feeds"); cf. also Spyridakis, "Βυζαντιακὰ αἰνίγματα," 1910, 143. This same version can be read also in two other MSS; see Kytion, "Βυζαντινὰ αἰνίγματα," 136 n. 23, and Evangelides, "Πατριάρχου Ἀλεξανδρείας Γερασίου τοῦ Σπαρταλιώτου αἰνίγματα" [n. 63 above], 297–98 n. 12).

95 *Greek Anthology* 14.101: "There is one father and twelve children. Each of these / has twice thirty children of different aspect; / some of them we see to be white and the others black, / and though immortal, they all perish."

96 Frag. 59 Blänsdorf: *Mater me genuit, eadem mox gignitur ex me* ("My mother begot me; soon she is begotten by me"). On this riddle, see S. Monda, "Fragm. Poet. Lat. Inc. 59 Blänsdorf," *RFIC* 127 (1999): 291–305; the poem was used by the grammarians as an example of *aenigma* (see, for instance, Charisius, *Ars grammatica* 4, p. 364.10 ss. Barwick).

97 "You seize me and I escape, though having been in your power; / you see me flee, but you are powerless to restrain me; / if you squeeze me tight, wanting to hold me fast, / I will escape, having left your grip empty." The riddle (64 Milovanović = 47 de Groote) can be found in the "collection" of Eustathios Makrembolites as well (5.4 Treu).

if it were something I like, I would stand even higher thanks to it and I would raise my head from the earth.” This ambiguity, a characteristic feature of the genre, has influenced the solutions of the riddle. In Par. Gr. 968 we read two solutions: νοῦς (“mind”) and ψυχή (“soul”). Both seem quite trivial, though; moreover they do not convincingly explain all the clues, especially in the second part of the riddle: why would mind or soul ascend if they loved and touched material stuff—the philosophical meaning of ὕλη? But the riddle is attested by other manuscripts and in other “collections” as well, where the same text is endowed with different solutions.

When he published the riddles of Eustathios Makrembolites, Maximilian Treu included in his edition some riddles whose authentic inclusion in what appears to be the original “collection” of Eustathios is far from certain; if the first group of eleven riddles might be attributed to Eustathios with a reasonable amount of certitude, because they share some peculiar features not present elsewhere in Byzantine aenigmatic literature, the other fifteen, divided by Treu into four smaller groups, were probably written by other poets.⁹⁸ Of these, the most definite is the third group, composed of seven items: two riddles ascribed to Aulikalamos, their poetic solutions ascribed to a man called Prosouch, the two counterremarks by Aulikalamos, and the very long counter-counterremark to the second riddle attributed to the same Prosouch. The first riddle has the solution θῆλυ (“female”); the second riddle is exactly the same text that Boissonade printed and attributed to Basil Megalomytes on the basis of the indication he found in Par. Gr. 968.⁹⁹ But, in all the other manuscripts mentioned by Treu in his apparatus, the solution attested is the much more convincing πῦρ: fire is happy because of wood (the concrete meaning of ὕλη), although it does not love it (in fact, it devours it); when fire gets closer to a log of wood, it becomes stronger and raises its head. Prosouch had no doubt about it: in his poetic solution, he says, “Fiery mind, you breathe fire, and write fire,

and poke with the fire-tongs of the speech the fire that has been lighted by the rhetorical coals.”¹⁰⁰

The first line of this riddle (βαίνω κατὰ γῆς καὶ πρὸς ὕψος αὐτὸν τρέχω) recalls the fourth line of our Venetian riddle (ἐπὶ γῆς οἰκῶ καὶ θεοῦμαι πρὸς πόλιν): the two poems are clearly connected, and not only because of their solutions. Thanks to this parallel, we can also explain the meaning of the mysterious θεοῦμαι of line 4: this word can only be a form of the verb θέω, a synonym of τρέχω; one might easily imagine a mistake for the correct future θεύσομαι (or, less probably, because it is nowhere attested, for a middle present θέομαι).¹⁰¹

The **twenty-second** and last riddle is again based on the elimination of the first letter of the first solution:

Δισύλλαβος πέφυκα σὸς φίλος, φίλε.

Εἰ δ’ ἂν τὸ πρῶτον ἀφέλῃς τῶν γραμμάτων
εὗρης με δεινόν, εἴπερ ἴδῃς, θηρίον.

F. 264r, col. 1, lines 22–24

If the translation does not present problems (“Dear friend, I am a friend of yours, made of two syllables. If you take away the first letter, you will find out—if you are able to see me—that I am a strange animal”), the interpretation is a bit more complicated, because the copyist has not written his own solution in the margin.

Its difficulty is heightened by the commendable ability of the unknown author: the subject φίλος (which plays on the vocative φίλε in a pleasant polyptoton) hints at a real person; the expression δεινόν . . . θηρίον makes the reader think of a wild animal; the clause εἴπερ ἴδῃς seems to be a simple wedge to fill the meter. But, in my opinion, this is not so: far from being a real subject, φίλος is simply the adjective that is frequently

98 On the peculiar features of this first group, see 238 below.

99 The first riddle (17 Milovanović) is the second item of the “collection” of Aulikalamos edited by Boissonade (2); Cougny printed two very similar versions (33 and 80) taken from different MSS. The second riddle is Basil Megalomytes 40 Boissonade; Milovanović (18) prints Eustathios’s text (with the following variants: line 1 γῆν instead of γῆς; line 3 φίλη instead of φίλω).

100 Ἐμπύριε φρήν, πῦρ πνέεις καὶ πῦρ γράφεις / καὶ πῦρ σκαλεύεις τῇ πυράγρα τοῦ λόγου / ἐκ ῥητορικῶν ὑπαναφθὲν ἀνθράκων. On the identity of Prosouch, see 237 below; on the presence of this riddle in some MSS of Michael Psellos’s *Chrysopea* (and the curious modification it underwent), see J. Bidez, *Catalogue des manuscrits alchimiques grecs* (Brussels, 1928), 6:15–16 and 45–47.

101 One of the two anonymous readers of the first version of this article (both of whom much improved it with their useful suggestions) says that, although it is indeed quite peculiar, the reading θεοῦμαι might be defended, because the verb is elsewhere attested and means “to be deified” or “to become like God”: in this case, then, what the author of the riddle wants to say is that, when it rises up to heaven, fire becomes like a God.

used by Homer together with a part of the body (a construction we can find in the language of riddles—and, in fact, we did see it in the tenth and the fourteenth riddles); δεινός has one of its many senses (a polysemy Greek poets knew very well, as the celebrated first stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone* shows), which is not the one we might expect given its closeness to the noun θηρίον; εἴπερ ἴδης means exactly what it says.¹⁰²

I think that the solution of the riddle is στῆθος ("breast"), a part of the body that is φίλον in many Homeric passages (always in the formula ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν);¹⁰³ without the first letter, it becomes a τῆθος, another Homeric word, which indicated a kind of shellfish, such as a clam, a mussel, or an oyster.¹⁰⁴ A clam is not "frightening," but it might be defined as "clever" (one of the meanings of δεινός) because it hides itself in the sand in order to elude its predators; having then become invisible, it can rightly challenge the reader by asking him if he is able to see it (εἴπερ ἴδης).¹⁰⁵

This is the last riddle of the series, since the second column of f. 264r deals with *Varia sacra et profana*. But it is not the last riddle of Marc. Gr. 512. As Mioni saw, the last item of the book is another riddle; after John Geometres' *laudatio metrica* of Saint Panteleemon, at f. 268 there is a small composition whose first line is ἐκ τοῦ σκότου, ἄνθρωπε, χωρὼν πρὸς σκότον; the explanation (σκότος τὸ πρὶν ὥκησα μητρὸς γαστέρα . . .) should give the solution of the riddle (σκότος). But, since it

is highly improbable for a riddle to contain its own solution (twice!) in its first line, I think that Geometres' composition (if he really is the author) is more a metaphoric poem on darkness than a proper riddle.

John Geometres seems to have written at least two riddles, though: Par. Suppl. Gr. 352 attributes to him a riddle on salt, written in an uncommon meter (two dactylic pentameters);¹⁰⁶ Vat. Pal. Gr. 367 attributes to him a group of fourteen poems, among which there is a riddle in five dodecasyllables.¹⁰⁷ But, as far as the "darkness" riddle is concerned (granting that it is a riddle), we have already seen that these attributions are seldom trustworthy: we cannot but agree with Alan Cameron, when he states that "riddle books, in ancient and Byzantine times as today, tend to be for the most part collections of anonymous puzzles handed down from generation to generation," since this accounts for the many changes in their structure we see when we analyze the different version of the same riddle.¹⁰⁸ And we also concur that "it is the exception rather than the rule for a riddle to be associated with a named author."¹⁰⁹

But we should not forget that even riddles, like any other kind of poetry, can be the product of the work of professional and skilled writers. If some attributions do not need to be taken at face value (we might doubt whether the emperor Julian ever wrote the riddle

102 For the use of φίλος with a part of the body (with the peculiar meaning of "one's own"), see Hom. *Il.* 3.31 (ἦτορ), 9.610 (γούνατα), 19.209 (λαϊμός), etc.; for other examples in the language of riddles, see 224, 234 above); the most famous ambiguous occurrence of δεινός is Soph., *Ant.* 332–33 (πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδεν ἄν- / θρώπου δεινότερον πέλει).

103 Hom., *Il.* 4.313 and 360, 13.73; *Od.* 20.9 and 23.215; also *h.Ap.* 113 and 524.

104 The singular τῆθος cannot be found before Aristotle (frag. 182 Gigon = 304 Rose, quoted by Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 3.88b), but the plural τήθεα (an εἶδος θαλασσιῶν ὀστρέων, according to the scholia [4:295 Erbse]) is attested in Homer (*Il.* 16.747).

105 For decisive help in finding this solution, I thank my colleague and friend Tommaso Braccini, with whom I have discussed all the riddles. I also thank my colleagues and friends Alice-Mary Talbot and Ivan Garofalo, whose palaeographical skill has greatly helped me in deciphering the difficult handwriting of the copyist. One of the two readers for *DOP* does not seem persuaded that δεινός here means "clever," as in the Sophoclean stasimon, and says that the vague indication "your friend" might suggest another solution (σταυρός "cross" and ταῦρος "bull," an animal that is surely much more "frightening"—if we translate δεινός in this way—than a clam).

106 The riddle (65 Milovanović) was first published by Cougny (81), who took it from J. A. Cramer, *Anecdota Graeca e codd. manuscriptis Bibliothecae Regiae Parisiensis* (Oxford, 1839–41), 4:327, and N. Piccolos, *Supplément à l'Anthologie Grecque, contenant des épigrammes et autres poésies légères inédites* (Paris, 1853), 149. The most recent edition of the riddle can be found in E. M. van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre* (Leiden and Boston, 2008), 392–94 n. 239; on its vernacular antecedents, see M. D. Lauxtermann, "Byzantine Didactic Poetry and the Question of Poeticity," in *"Doux remède . . .": poésie et poétique à Byzance*, ed. P. Odorico, P. A. Agapitos, and M. Hinterberger (Paris, 2009), 42–43. For the poems of Johannes Geometres in Pal. Suppl. Gr. 352 (a MS written in the thirteenth century), see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry* (n. 47 above), 287–90.

107 Sajdak 8 in I. Sajdak, "Spicilegium Geometreum II," *Eos* 33 (1930–31): 527–28. On its solution, see the suggestions by S. G. Mercati, "Altre osservazioni alle poesie del codice Vaticano Palatino 367," *SBN* 4 (1935): 305–8 (now in Mercati, *Collectanea*, 1:426–31) and K. Kumaniecki, "Ad Ioannis Geometrae epigramma VIII," *Eos* 34 (1932–33): 343–44; the MS was written at the beginning of the fourteenth century. On its attribution, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 302 ("There is no reason to dispute Geometres' authorship").

108 Cameron, "Michael Psellos" (n. 30 above), 341.

109 Ibid.

on an acrobat so many manuscripts attribute to him),¹¹⁰ it is surely true that there were some Byzantine poets who, between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries, dedicated themselves to the composition of riddles: some years after Geometres, there was Christopher Mitylenaios, whose diverse poetic production includes six (or seven) riddles in dodecasyllables (most of which appeared in later manuscripts either anonymously or under other attributions, as we have seen); in the same years, there was John Mauropous, who wrote “a riddle on a boat”;¹¹¹ some years after Mauropous, there was his pupil Michael Psellos, who wrote for his own pupil, the emperor Constantine Doukas, at least three riddles in political verse (which are almost always the first three riddles of the enigmatic “collection” handed down under his name); and in the following century the versatile Theodore Prodromos was attracted by the charm of riddles, if he really did compose the riddle in elegiac couplets handed down to us under his name.¹¹²

110 Basil Megalomytes 8 Boissonade = 22 and 51 Cougny = 41 Milovanović (cf. Hertlein 2:612 n. 3); in Par. Suppl. Gr. 690, a similar version of this riddle is attributed to an otherwise unknown author, Eustathius Kanikles; cf. L. Sternbach, “Analecta Byzantina,” *České Museum Filologické* 6 (1900): 291–93; and Zanandrea, “Enigmistica bizantina” (n. 18 above), 149. Laur. Gr. 32.16 (a MS copied by Maximus Planudes between 1280 and 1283 that preserves a short collection of riddles; see Cameron, *Greek Anthology*, 202–16) ascribes to Julian the metrical riddle on the “daughter of Icarius” (23 Cougny = 43 Milovanović; cf. Hertlein 2:612 n. 4). Baroccianus Gr. 133 (f. 161v) ascribes to Julian the riddle (better, the enigmatic sentence) Ὡς ἐθέλει τὸ φέρον σε φέρειν, φέρου· ἢν δ’ ἀπιθήσῃς / καὶ σαυτὸν βλάβῃς, καὶ τὸ φέρον σε φέρει (24 Cougny), but Par. Gr. 1630 (f. 192, cf. Boissonade, *Anecdota*, 2:475) gives it to Basil the Great (an attribution rejected by I. Vassil, *Initia carminum Byzantinorum* [Berlin and New York, 2005], 896, who marks the poem with the indication *carmen dubium vel spurium*); on this epigram, see also Cameron, *Greek Anthology*, 330; and Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 243 n. 5. Johannes Tzetzes (*Chiliades* 6.959) ascribes to Julian a riddle on the hippocentaur (cf. Hertlein 2:612 n. 5).

111 On this riddle (60 Lagarde, preserved by Vat. Gr. 676), see 219–20 and n. 47 above.

112 The text of the riddle (absent from the collection gathered by Milovanović) can be read in PG 133:1418: υἱός ἡμετέρου με φιτύσσατο διὰ θυγάτηρ, / ἥρι δ’ ἀμπελάω τῷ περιγιοτέρῳ. / Ὑῖν ἐμὸν λαγόνεσσι φορευμένη εἰμι καὶ αὐτή / τὸν δὲ τε γειναμένη, ὀλλυμαι· ὅς δὲ βροτοῖς / λυιμοῦ (sic) ἀργαλέοιο δυσάλθεος ἐστὶν ἀκέστωρ / τὸν γενεῇ μερόπων ἢ δυσαρεστοτάτῃ / καὶ τε μάλιστα φιλεῖ, καὶ ἀπεχθαίρῃσι μάλιστα. / Γνωθὶ με, τίς τέλεθω, ὃν τέκον, ὅς με τέκον. The riddle is attributed to Prodromos by three MSS (Pal. Gr. 43, Neapol. II D 4, Vat. Gr. 305); the solution is a cloud. On this riddle, see Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos*, 55 (n. 16 above) and Zanandrea, “Enigmistica bizantina,” 152.

One good reason for the increasing popularity of such a minor poetic genre since the second half of the tenth century might be the likely diffusion of Constantine Kephala’s anthology in the intellectual circles of Byzantium: whether the stimulating book on “arithmetical problems and various riddles” was actually gathered by “Big-head” (as Cameron affectionately calls him) or copied into what is now the beginning of Par. Suppl. Gr. 384 a few years after him, the riddles that had been collected “mostly as an exercise for the students who like to labor,” so that they might know which logical pastimes were beloved by the ancient pupils and which by the modern ones, did appeal to other people as well.¹¹³

The fact that, some years after John Geometres, Christopher Mitylenaios, and John Mauropous, even a celebrated and skilled writer like Psellos had ventured upon such a curious enterprise probably induced other less celebrated and skilled poets to compose other, similar riddles, which in the following centuries, together with some aenigmatic epigrams from Kephala’s anthology, ended up as a part of a collection of riddles attributed to the “most learned and exceedingly honorable” Psellos himself.¹¹⁴

113 In the index of the MS (f. Ar of Pal Gr. 23), the title of the book is Ἀριθμητικὰ καὶ γρήφα σύμμικτα (see P. Wolters, “De epigrammatum Graecorum anthologias libellus” [Ph.D. diss., Halle, 1882], 24–26). For the nickname “Big-head,” see Cameron, *Greek Anthology*, 254. On the debated origin of book 14, see the persuasive discussion of Cameron, *Greek Anthology*, 135–37, who quotes the interesting preface to the book (surprisingly overlooked by R. Aubreton, “La tradition manuscrite des épigrammes de l’Anthologie grecque,” *REA* 70 [1968]: 32–81) and thinks it is “the product of Kephala’s pen” (γυμνασίας χάριν καὶ ταῦτα τοῖς φιλοπόντοις προτίθημι, ἵνα γνῶς τί μὲν παλαιῶν παιδες, τί δὲ νέων). Cameron’s opinion has been recently accepted (with some reservations) by F. Maltomini, *Tradizione antologica dell’epigramma greco: Le sillogi minori di età bizantina e umanistica* (Rome, 2008), 189–95.

114 R. Aubreton, “Michel Psellos et l’Anthologie Palatine,” *L’Antiquité Classique* 38 (1969): 459–62, tried to ascribe also to Psellos three other riddles present both in his “collection” and in the fourteenth book of the *Palatine Anthology* (5, 35, and 58), but on this unlikely hypothesis see the persuasive remarks of Cameron, “Michael Psellos.” The eighteen riddles of Psellos’s “collection” are the following: the first three (35–37 Westerink) are very probably his; the second three (38–40) come from *AP*; three (45, 49, and 52) come from Christopher Mitylenaios and one (48) comes from John Mauropous. Three other riddles (42, 43, 47) are also present in Basil Megalomytes’ “collection” (21, 25, and 6 Boissonade)—a “collection” where we find also one riddle from *AP* and Psellos (Megalomytes 10 Boissonade is also *AP* 35 and Psellos 40 W) and two riddles

Such are the epithets given to the poet in the most complete version of the title of his riddle “collection,” together with the name of his pupil (τοῦ σοφωτάτου καὶ ὑπερτίμου Ψελλοῦ πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Μιχαὴλ τὸν Δούκαν αἰνίγματα).¹¹⁵ And, in fact, the didactic purpose for the composition of riddles seems to have been a normal pattern in the Byzantine educational system. Even Constantine Kephala, when he was the assistant teacher to Gregory of Kampsas at the “new church” built by Basil I and dedicated at the end of the ninth century, used riddles as a didactic tool, if we trust the indication written by one of the scribes of the Palatine manuscript near an epigram that, although it does not belong to the fourteenth book, falls nonetheless in the category of riddles, since it is “a fictitious epitaph by Alcaeus of Messene apparently inspired by a tomb inscribed simply with the letter Φ written twice, a riddling representation of the name Pheidis (φεῖδης)—that is, “the letter Phi written twice.”¹¹⁶

The part that riddles might have played in school programs seems also witnessed by a curious text written between the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, the description of the famous church of the Holy Apostles, where the author, Nicholas Mesarites, tells us that, among the young students of the school who attended classes in a colonnade outside the church, those who had achieved “the higher

and more complete stages” of their education used to “weave webs of phrases and transform the written sense into riddles, saying one thing with their tongues, but hiding something else in their minds.”¹¹⁷

The composition of verse riddles seems to have been popular through the late period of Byzantium. There are at least three authors who appear to have made a strong contribution to the success of the genre. The first one is Basil Megalomytes, who was either a very good poet or just a diligent collector; we do not know when he lived, but his name (“Basil Big-nose,” according to Alan Cameron) is connected with many riddles, as we have seen.¹¹⁸ The second one is Aulikalamos, who created his own riddles in the twelfth century and asked his friend Prosouch to find out the solutions and to write them down in poetry.¹¹⁹ The riddles written in the thirteenth century by the third one (Eustathios Makrembolites) induced another poet (Manuel Holobolos) to write the solutions—and Holobolos did this with great enthusiasm, as demonstrated by the fact that some poetic solutions are even longer than the riddles themselves!¹²⁰

from Christopher and Psellos (Megalomytes 7 Boissonade is also Christopher 71 de Groote and Psellos 45 W; Megalomytes 26 Boissonade is also Christopher 21 de Groote and Psellos 49 W).

115 As Westerink has noted, the name of the pupil is wrong: the adjective πορφυρόβλαστος, used in the second riddle of the series, demonstrates that the poems were composed not for Michael, but for Constantine instead (“puer imperialis, cui Psellus sua obtulit, non est Michael VII Ducas, quippe qui Porphyrogenetus . . . non fuerit, sed frater eius minor Constantinus”).

116 Cameron, *Greek Anthology*, 109–10. Alcaeus’s epigram (7.429) is the last of a section of enigmatic epitaphs introduced by the epigram where Meleager describes his own tomb (on this curious section, see M. Fantuzzi, “L’epigramma,” in *Muse e modelli: La poesia ellenistica da Alessandro Magno ad Augusto*, ed. M. Fantuzzi and R. Hunter [Rome and Bari 2002], 440–46); on Alcaeus’s poem, see also K. J. Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands: Hellenistic Epigrams in Context* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1998), 268–69; and J. S. Bruss, “A Program Poem of Alcaeus of Messene: Epigram 16 G-P (= A.P. 7.429),” *CJ* 98, no. 2 (2002–3): 161–80. The note was written by the scribe C (τοῦτο τὸ ἐπίγραμμα ὁ Κεφαλᾶς προεβάλετο ἐν τῇ σχολῇ τῆς νέας ἐκκλησίας ἐπὶ τοῦ μακαρίου Γρηγορίου μαγίστορος), the so-called “Corrector”; Cameron correctly points out that “προβάλλομαι is the *vox propria* of setting or propounding a riddle.”

117 G. Downey, “Nikolaos Mesarites: Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople,” *TAPS* 47 (1957), chap. 8.3, 866 (the English translation) and 899 (the Greek text: ἑτεροὶ οἱ καὶ πρὸς τὰ μείζω καὶ τελεώτερα πεφθακότες πλοκάς συνείρουσι νοημάτων καὶ τὸν τῶν γεγραμμένων νοῦν ἐς τὸ γρίφον μετασκευάζουσιν, ἄλλα μὲν λαλοῦντες γλώσσησιν, ἄλλα δὲ κεύθοντες ἐν φρεσίν); the last line is a Homeric quotation (*Il.* 9.313). N. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London, 1983), 23, takes the passage as a witness that the composition of riddles played a part in school programs; it seems likely, however, that Mesarites was simply referring to the composition of schedographic exercises (which were often called γρίφοι because of their complexity). On the use of riddles as a teaching tool, see also the remarks of Milovanović, *Βυζαντινὰ αἰνίγματα*, 10–11.

118 Cameron, “Michael Psellos,” 342, calls Basil a “mysterious figure (of quite uncertain date).” In my opinion, Cantarella’s dating (to the eleventh century) is too early: R. Cantarella, *Poeti bizantini* (Milan, 1992), 2:763.

119 Cameron, “Michael Psellos,” 342, calls Aulikalamos and Prosouch “two shadowy twelfth-century figures.” On their identities see Treu, *Eustathii* (n. 2 above), 31–34: the first is identified with a Theodore Aulikalamos who was πρωτονοτάριος τοῦ δρόμου at the end of the twelfth century during the reign of the Emperor Alexios III Komnenos Angelos; the second is identified with a Nikephoros Prosouch who was “praetor Graeciae et Peloponneso ab imperatore Byzantino praepositus” in the second half of the twelfth century. As in the case of Psellos and Megalomytes, not all the riddles attributed to Aulikalamos were actually written by him.

120 The eleven riddles that make up the first section of Treu’s edition are all followed by the answers of a poet called Holobolos.

But these compositions do not possess the naïve charm of those other riddles which, while multiplying the play of the progressive subtractions by each time adding a new clue, keep an innocent freshness that might suggest a popular origin. Eustathios's riddles do not stop at taking just the first letter, but go as far as lengthening or shortening a vowel.

Let us look for instance at the second riddle:

Ἐκ γῆς ἐγὼ θρέπτειραν ἔσχον τὴν φύσιν,
τριγράμματον φέρω δὲ δισυλλαβίαν.
Ἀρχὴν τεμών μου καὶ μεγαλύνας μέσην,
στολῆς λάβης μόριον ἱερωμένης.
Τέλος δέ μου πρώτιστόν ἐστι γραμμάτων.¹²¹

The beginning is not different from the usual riddles ("From the earth I found a nurse for my growth, I have two syllables and three letters"), but in the next lines ("trim off my beginning and lengthen the middle,

and you get the part of a holy robe"), together with the "cut" of the first letter, we find the lengthening of the middle one. The final line ("and my final part is the very first of the alphabet") follows the usual pattern, but Holobolos's poetic solution, with its lofty style and pedantic wordiness (and, moreover, with the three solutions—πόα, ῥα, α—craftily set into the Greek text), betrays the deeply literary descent of both compositions:

Ἡ γῆ σε πάντως, ὦ καλὴ πόα, τρέφει·
κλῆσιν δὲ τριγράμματον ἀληθῶς φέρεις.
Ἀρχὴν δὲ τέμνων καὶ μέσην σου μηκύνων,
ὦαν νοῶ σε καὶ τιμῶ σε προφρόνως
καθὰ στολῆς μόριον ἡγιασμένης.
Τέλος δὲ σὸν γνῶριμον, ἄλφα γὰρ πέλει.
Ὅντως νοητὴν ἐκπνέεις εὐωδίαν,
χρυσὴ πόα μοι, τὸν δὲ σὸν φυτηκόμον
ὥς ἀγχίνουν τέθηπα καὶ σοφὸν λίαν.¹²²

The peculiar dialogical structure of these last poetic compositions probably helps us in finding the right venue (or, at least, one of the most probable venues) for the recitation of similar poems: it is quite possible that they were performed "among a group of friends who trusted and liked each other, who thought of themselves as cultural equals, who met for a sincere exchange of news and views, and shared them in a game of poetic skill; a game in which anything went—lyrical, irreverent, dramatic, scurrilous—as long as it scanned, it was clever, and it did not induce yawning."¹²³ Magdalino's excellent analysis of the peculiar function of Byzantine poetry in the eleventh century is, at least in my opinion, valid both for the preceding and the following centuries; drinking parties were likely the right place not only for a poet to recite his carefully composed lines

But, again, not all the riddles were written by Makrembolites: as Cameron, "Michael Psellos," 342, points out, the eighth riddle of this "probably thirteenth-century collection" is much older, because it also belongs to the funerary epigrams of the *Greek Anthology* (7.311). This riddle (16' Milovanović: Ὁ τάφος οὗτος ἐντὸς οὐκ ἔχει νέκυν, / ὁ νεκρὸς οὗτος ἐκτὸς οὐκ ἔχει τάφον, / ἀλλ' αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ νεκρὸς ἐστὶ καὶ τάφος) even has a Latin forerunner (Ausonius, *Ep.* 29, see App. V 26 Schenkl: *Habet sepulcrum non id intus mortuum, / habet nec ipse mortuus bustum super, / sibi sed est ipse hic sepulcrum et mortuus*); the original, mythological solution (Niobe) was then changed into a biblical one (Lot's wife), as stated by the lemma we read in the Palatine MS ("The solution is the wife of Lot. But the Greeks refer it to Niobe"); Holobolos sticks to this solution (Ὅρος τὸ Σηγῶρ κατὰ νοῦν, φίλος, λάβε / καὶ δὴ κατίδης τὴν ἀλὸς στήλην ξένην, / ἦν Λῶτ γυναικα πρεσβύτου γραφὴ λέγει, / κάκειθεν εὐρῆς τοῦδε τοῦ γρίφου λύσιν). On the complicated relationship between Ausonius, Agathias (one of the compilers of the epigrammatic *Garlands* used by Constantine Kephala for his own anthology—but also the poet to whom a scholion to a passage of Sophocles' *Electra* ascribes the riddle), Makrembolites, and Holobolos, see: L. Sternbach, *Meletemata Graeca* (Vienna, 1886), 23–28. The thirteenth-century date makes it impossible to identify this Makrembolites (Eustathios Makrembolites in one manuscript, simply Makrembolites in the others) with the author of the novel *The Story of Hysmine and Hysminias*, whose real name was Eumathios. As for the name of the Holobolos who wrote the poetic solutions of the riddles, I stick to Treu's opinion, who identifies him with "Manuel ille Holobolos, qui imperantibus Michaelē [1261–1282] et Andronico II [1282–1328] Palaeologis rhetor rhetorum fuit" (Treu, *Eustathii*, 25); see also M. Treu, "Manuel Holobolos," *BZ* 5 (1896): 538–59 (on Holobolos's solutions, see, in particular, 548).

121 Eustathios Makrembolites 1.2 Treu (137 Milovanović).

122 "The earth nourishes you, to be sure, lovely grass: / you do indeed have a name of three letters. / By trimming your beginning and lengthening your middle, / I recognize that you are 'fringe' and I honor you gladly, / as you are a part of a hallowed robe. / Your end is familiar, for it is *alpha*. / Truly you exhale a perceptible fragrance, / O golden grass, and he who tends you / astounds me, as one shrewd and very wise."

123 P. Magdalino, "Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos," in Bernard and Demoen, *Poetry* (n. 69 above), 34.

or to improvise his rhymed jibes under the influence of “countless cups of wine,” but also for a witty person to ask “an amusing problem put in jest, that is, a question that requires, by searching the mind, an answer to be given for a prize or forfeit,” as the Peripatetic philosopher Clearchus of Soli, a disciple of Aristotle, had defined a riddle in his lost treatise *Περὶ αἰνιγμάτων*¹²⁴—but also, as in the case of Eustathios’s questions and Holobolos’s answers, to write the poetic solution to a literary conundrum composed many years before.

The outcome of the increasing passion for this genre is witnessed by the more or less apocryphal “collection” of riddles ascribed to Michael Psellos and copied in a fairly good number of manuscripts during the fifteenth and the sixteenth century. But, before his name (and that of other writers or collectors, such as Megalomytes, Makrembolites, and Aulikalamos) began to be connected with riddles composed many years before, such as those written by Christopher Mitylenaios and John Mauropous, or by the unknown authors of some epigrams of the fourteenth book of the *Palatine Anthology*, or even by Greek comic poets,¹²⁵ in other manuscripts copied between the end of the

thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century some scribes started to gather anonymous collections where riddles composed by real poets (though deprived of the name of their real author) lived side by side not only with famous riddles (though in a different form, sometimes even with a different number of clues), but also with much less famous ones. This is the case of our manuscript, Marc. Gr. 512, composed between the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century, where many *αἰνίγματα* never attested elsewhere are mixed with popular riddles (shrimp and bread, wooden bell and cock), with other aenigmatic compositions that put together different clues taken from different equally popular riddles (grasshopper and fire), and even with poems written by well-known authors (Christopher’s tent). But it is also the case of another manuscript, Pal. Gr. 356, written at the beginning of the fourteenth century by a similar hand and in a very similar handwriting:¹²⁶ here, on both sides of f. 168, we find (preceded by the title *Αἰνίγματα πάνυ ὠραῖα*) a collection of twelve riddles; most of them are, again, never attested elsewhere, but one riddle is Christopher’s rainbow, a second one weaves together some clues taken from the shrimp riddle, and a third one is the ump-teenth variation of the honeycomb riddle.¹²⁷

Riddles should therefore neither be overlooked as simple *Volksliteratur* nor considered as valueless intellectual mind games: esteemed by learned persons and

124 Clearchus, frag. 86 Wehrli (quoted by Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 10.448c: γρίφος πρόβλημα ἐστὶ παιστικόν, προστακτικόν τοῦ διὰ ζητήσεως εὑρεῖν τῇ διανοίᾳ τὸ προβληθέν τιμῆς ἢ ἐπιζημίου χάριν εἰρημένον). Aristotle was probably the first ancient author who studied the nature of riddles; in his *Poetics*, he stated that “it is in the nature of a riddle for one to speak of a situation that actually exists in an impossible way”—or, in other words, that the main feature of riddles is “describing real things through the connection of impossible things” (1458a25–6: Αἰνιγματός τε γὰρ ἰδέα αὕτη ἐστὶ, τὸ λέγοντα ὑπάρχοντα ἀδύνατα συνάψαι). On riddles in antiquity, see E. Cook, “The Figure of Enigma: Rhetoric, History, Poetry,” *Rhetorica* 19 (2001): 349–78, and idem, *Enigmas and Riddles in Literature* (Cambridge, 2006).

125 A riddle of Basil Megalomytes’ “collection” (39 Boissonade = 26 Milovanović) is the Byzantine transcription in political verse (Ἔστι τις φύσις θήλεια, φωνήεσσα καὶ λάλος, / καὶ βρέφη περικόλπια σώζει καὶ περικρύπτει. / Ἄγλωσσα δὲ καὶ λαλιᾶς ἀδίδακτα τὰ βρέφη. / ἀλλ’ ὅμως ἐντρανον αὐτοῖς καὶ γεγωνὸν τὸ φθέγμα. / κὰν τοῖς ποντοῖς ὕδασιν οἷς θέλουσι λαλοῦσι, / καὶ τοὺς ἐν νήσοις φθάνουσι καὶ τοὺς ἐν ταῖς ἡπείροις. / Πολλοῖς δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτῶν ἀκούειν καὶ παροῦσι. / τῆς δ’ ἀκοῆς τὴν αἴσθησιν κωφὴν ἔχει τὰ βρέφη) of the hexametrical γρίφος propounded by the poetess Sappho in the homonymous comedy written by Antiphanes in the fourth century BCE (frag. 194.1–5 Kassel-Austin: Ἔστι φύσις θήλεια βρέφη σώζουσ’ ὑπὸ κόλποις / αὐτῆς, ὄντα δ’ ἄφωνα βοὴν ἰστυσι γεγωνόν / καὶ διὰ πόντιον οἶδμα καὶ ἡπείρου διὰ πάσης / οἷς ἐθέλει θνητῶν, τοῖς δ’ οὐδὲ παροῦσιν ἀκούειν / ἔξεστιν· κωφὴν δ’ ἀκοῆς αἴσθησιν ἔχουσιν), quoted in Athenaeus’s *Deipnosophists* 10.450e–f.

126 Stevenson, *Codices Manuscripti Palatini Graeci* (n. 15 above), 203: “Bombyc., in f. parvo, saec. XIV, exceptis foliis 195–196 saec. XVI suppletis, fol. 196. Initio mutilus. Olim Arsenii Monembasiensis episcopi (Michaëlis Apostolii filii). Ex. codd. Parisios primum translatis, Heidelbergae postea redditus.”

127 The Christophorean riddle (35 de Groote) occupies the third place in the collection of the Pal. Gr. 356; the shrimp riddle occupies the sixth place; the honeycomb riddle occupies the twelfth and last. Since the rainbow riddle is also present in Basil Megalomytes’ “collection” (41 Boissonade = 13 Milovanović), after the short definition of the item (“Aenigmata XII, senariis iambicis”) and the incipit of the first line of the first riddle (Τίς ἐστὶν ἄλλος τῶν κακῶν σπορεὺς βλάβης;), Stevenson, *Codices Manuscripti Palatini Graeci*, 207, wrote that some of these riddles are ascribed in other MSS to Basil Megalomytes (“horum aenigmatum nonnulla in aliis codicibus nomine Basilii Megalomitae inscribuntur”). Such a remark (not very precise: there is only one riddle—Christopher’s one—that other MSS ascribe to Megalomytes) was surely provoked by the note “est Basilii Megalomitae Cod. Reg. 968,” written in the right margin of the page (probably by a French librarian) during the short stay of the MS in Paris, in the shelves of the “Bibliothèque de la Nation,” rue Richelieu, in the palace of the cardinal Mazarin.

beloved by much less learned ones, bound to beget an incredible number of different imitators, from the equally anonymous people who transferred them into *demotike* to the erudite scholars of the Renaissance who made them a successful literary genre,¹²⁸ heirs of a tradition that takes its root in the deepest heart of classical

mythology (Oedipus and the Sphinx) and influences both Greek and Latin literature (the examples quoted by Athenaeus, the fourteenth book of the *Greek Anthology*, the one hundred *aenigmata* by Symphosius), they form a corpus of Byzantine secular poetry not to be neglected.

128 For the fortune of Byzantine riddles in modern Greek culture, see P. Koukoules, *Βυζαντινών Βίος και Πολιτισμός* (Athens, 1948), 2:64–86, but also C. Chatzitati-Kapsomenou, *Θησαυρός νεοελληνικών αινιγμάτων* (Heraklion, 2000); for the success of riddles in European literatures, see the very interesting three books of M. De Filippis: *The Literary Riddle in Italy to the End of the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1948); *The Literary Riddle in Italy in the Seventeenth Century* (Berkeley, 1953); *The Literary Riddle in Italy in the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1967).

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